

Party Strategies and Voting Behaviour in Multi-level States

Inauguraldissertation
zur
Erlangung des Doktorgrades
der
Wirtschafts- und Sozialwissenschaftlichen Fakultät
der
Universität zu Köln

2017

vorgelegt von
Laura Cabeza Pérez

aus
Barcelona

Referent: Prof. Dr. André Kaiser

Korreferent: Prof. Dr. Ingo Rohlfing

Tag der Promotion: 22 September 2017

Acknowledgements

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the board members of the Research Training Group SOCLIFE for the financial support during these three years of scholarship. Among them, I am most grateful to André Kaiser for his thoughtful supervision. He made the complicated simple. I also convey my gratitude to Ingo Rohlfing for being my second supervisor and to Karsten Hank for his commitment to the PhD students. Régis Dandoy deserves special thanks for the very valuable comments and recommendations he gave me acting as my guest-discussant in the SOCLIFE Research Seminar. I am particularly grateful to Ravena Penning for the administrative support and to my fellows, especially to Sabina Haveric for being a great office mate that welcomed me every morning with an unconditional smile and to Stefano Ronchi for reading my work and helping me constantly.

This dissertation does not only represent my work; it is the effort of many years of research conducted within the Regional Manifestos Project together with two extraordinary mentors. Sonia Alonso helped and taught me immensely, and without her generosity, this dissertation would not exist. Braulio Gómez has been my major advisor, and an endless source of ideas and inspiration. I will never be able to thank him enough for giving me not only the example of what a good researcher should be, but also the tools to start building things with my own materials. *Gracias, equipo.*

Finally, my deepest gratitude goes to my friends and family. Thanks to Stefano (again) and Ana for making good times better and hard times easier in Cologne. To Eleonora for bringing smiles and joy to the silent corridor of Patrizia-Tower. To Laura, Úrsula, Anna, my sisters, Jordi and my nephews for their visits and for being always on the other side of the phone/screen. I would like to definitely dedicate my achievements to my parents, who did not have the opportunity to attend school but decided that I would be whatever I wanted to be. *A mis padres, mi gratitud infinita, porque mis logros son fruto de vuestra vida de dedicación y trabajo.*

Contents

Chapter 1:

Introduction.....	1-18
1.1 The <i>territorial</i> political animal	2
1.2 Methodological nationalism: mind the (black-hole) gap	4
1.3 Relevance: the problem of accountability in multi-level countries.....	5
1.4 The overlooked role of political parties	7
1.5 Breaking through the individual's side	8
1.6 Overview of the thesis	8
1.7 Methodology: The Regional Manifestos Project	11
1.8 A note on the contribution of the doctoral candidate to the co-authored articles ...	13
1.9 References.....	15

Chapter 2:

Parties' Electoral Strategies in a Two-Dimensional Political Space: Evidence from Spain and Great Britain (with Sonia Alonso and Braulio Gómez).....	19-50
2.1 Introduction.....	20
2.2 The repertoire of party strategies in a two-dimensional political space.....	22
2.2.1 The economic and the territorial dimensions	22
2.2.2 The repertoire of party strategies	23
2.3 Data and cases.....	25
2.4 Operationalizing saliency, position and blurring	27
2.5 Mapping the preferences of political parties.....	31
2.5.1 Saliency.....	31
2.5.2 Position	33
2.5.3 Blurring.....	35
2.6 Explaining parties' strategies in a two-dimensional space	36
2.6.1 Operationalizing party strategies	36
2.6.2 An exploratory analysis	37
2.7 Conclusions.....	42
2.8 References.....	45
2.9 Annex.....	48

Chapter 3:

How National Parties Nationalize Regional Elections: The Case of Spain (with Sonia Alonso and Braulio Gómez)	51-78
3.1 Introduction.....	52
3.2 Theoretical Argument and Hypotheses.....	53
3.3 Cases and Data: Nationalizing Regional Elections in Spain.....	58
3.3.1 Case Selection.....	58
3.3.2 Opposite Electoral Contexts and Preliminary Qualitative Evidence	60
3.3.3 A Quantitative Indicator of the Strategy of Nationalization Based on Election Manifestos.....	61
3.4 Results.....	64
3.5 Conclusions.....	73
3.6 References.....	75

Chapter 4:

‘First-Order Thinking’ in Second-Order Contests: A Comparison of Local, Regional and European Elections in Spain..... 79-114

4.1 Introduction	80
4.2 The second-order election model, here and there.....	82
4.2.1 European elections, or the origins of the second-order election model.....	82
4.2.2 Regional elections as second-order elections, contradictory findings.....	83
4.2.3 Local elections, between first and second-order	83
4.3 Turning to the micro-level.....	84
4.3.1 Defining ‘issue contamination’ and ‘first-order thinking’	85
4.4 The individual determinants of ‘first-order thinking’	87
4.4.1 Resource-based approach	87
4.4.2 Motivation-based approach	88
4.5 Data, case and methods	91
4.5.1 The Spanish case	92
4.5.2 Measuring ‘first-order thinking’	92
4.5.3 Multivariate analysis	94
4.6 Results	97
4.6.1 How many citizens report to vote on the basis of level-specific issues?.....	97
4.6.2 When are individuals more likely to take into account level-specific issues? .	99
4.6.3 Does ‘first-order thinking’ matter?.....	105
4.7 Conclusions	106
4.8 References	109
4.9 Appendix	114

Chapter 5:

Conclusions 115-120

5.1 References	120
----------------------	-----

Chapter 1

Introduction

Children, impelled by curiosity, often play taking anything that falls into their hands apart. They soon realise that taking things apart is easier than putting them back together. Yet, they do not truly understand how things work until they are able to reassemble the pieces. In many democracies, authority is fragmented and elections take place at various political levels. Citizens elect not just national representatives, but also local, regional or supra-national ones. Traditional approaches in political science research have mainly addressed voting behaviour analysing elections by office type (Nicholson, 2005). National election results are typically explained by national issues, such as the state of the national economy, while the role of sub-national or supra-national factors is stressed to explain the results of sub-national or supra-national elections, respectively. Contests to elect representatives for different tiers of government are, so to say, taken apart.

However, elections do not take place in isolation from each other. On the contrary, what happens in one specific arena certainly impacts electoral choices at lower or upper levels in the same country. It is beyond dispute, for example, that the electoral fate of state-wide parties in sub-national and supra-national elections is linked to their performance at the national level (Gschwend, 2008; Jeffery and

Hough, 2009; Lago-Peñas and Lago-Peñas, 2011; Amat, Jurado and León, 2012). In fact, a well-established stream of research in political science, the second-order election model, considers that sub-national and supra-national elections results are often determined by issues and events belonging to the first-order national arena (Reif and Schmitt, 1980). It is only by taking these vertical dynamics into account, putting again the pieces of different electoral levels together, that one can start to get a complete picture about how democracy works in multi-level systems.

The aim of this cumulative dissertation is to analyse how parties and voters have adapted to the challenges of multi-level politics, going beyond a single-level focus. Particular attention is paid to the territorial dimension of party competition, and the ‘contamination’ of sub-national and supra-national arenas with national issues. To this end, the three papers of this cumulative dissertation focus on different but interrelated aspects: How parties compete in political settings in which together with the socioeconomic left-right dimension, there is a salient centre-periphery cleavage? Do parties wilfully ‘contaminate’ regional elections with national-level issues? When are individuals more likely to take into account level-specific issues in second-order contests (i.e., local, regional and European elections)?

The following pages of this introduction are devoted to elaborate on the overall relevance, and to summarize the three single contributions, integrating each article into the broad general context. It is not the intention of this introductory part to provide an extensive literature review. Given that this thesis is written as a cumulative work, each of the individual articles contains the review of the relevant literature. The three articles were conceived to be free-standing, that is, are meant to be read and understood independently. However, they cover related themes. Consequently, for those reading this complete dissertation, some redundancy among the three papers is inevitable.

1.1 The *territorial* political animal

There are at least three reasons to turn our attention towards the dynamics of multi-level politics. First, a significant impetus to the implementation of

decentralization reforms has spread all over the world during the last decades. Several countries have become federations since the end of the World Wide II, a fact that has led scholars to talk about a ‘federalist revolution’ and to proclaim ‘the end of the statist epoch’ (Elazar, 1991). Today, there are about 25 federal countries across all five continents, representing at least 40 per cent of the world’s population. This figure rises to more than 70 per cent if the population from countries that are not formally federations but use some sort of federalist arrangement is included.

Second, the authority of sub-national governments is on the rise. Sub-national governments around the world have gained influence over decision-making. A systematic study made in 42 democracies has shown that, over the past half century, there has been a steady increase in the powers of regional governments (Hooghe, Marks and Schakel, 2010). In fact, important policy domains for the quality of life of citizens, such as education or health care, are partially or totally managed by regional or even local authorities in many countries.

Third, an increasing number of countries are being faced with autonomist or secessionist movements. In the European Union alone, there are at least 37 stateless regions in which many inhabitants are demanding either greater autonomy or full independence from the nation-state. With few exceptions, regionalist aspirations —and parties representing them— have been present in the majority of the European Union member states¹.

And to look at the whole picture, power has not just been shifting from the nation-state downwards to the regions or local authorities but also upwards to supra-national institutions such as the European Union. In sum, the political animal described by Aristotle two millennia ago could be conceived nowadays as a *territorial* political animal.

¹ Up to 40 regionalist parties from 17 EU Member States are currently part of the European Free Alliance (EFA), whose main goal is to defend the right to self-determination of stateless nations and regions in Europe.

1.2 Methodological nationalism: mind the (black-hole) gap

Regardless of the importance of the processes of decentralization and Europeanization, we still know little about political parties, voters and elections at the sub-national and supra-national levels. The reason is that political science research has largely remained dominated by the so-called ‘methodological nationalism’ which is the tendency to choose the nation-state as the unit of analysis (Jeffery and Schakel, 2013). As a result, most research on elections is about national elections.

This has an empirical counterpart: there is a gap, almost a black hole, in terms of existing data with which to measure the preferences of voters and, especially, of parties in sub-national and supra-national elections. Several scholars have readily recognized the need to re-focus our analyses.

Thus, for example, Gschwend writes the following with regards to the lack of data to estimate parties’ policy positions in multi-level states:

‘since parties do typically make the first move in dealing with various incentives in multi-level systems, a systematic analysis of party policy at the national, compared to the sub-national level ... might supplement the individual-level data’ (Gschwend, 2008: 237).

Likewise, Fabre and Swenden call for:

‘stronger links between traditional areas of party and policy research and multi-level party research and for more comparative data collection on multi-level parties and policy positions’ (Fabre and Swenden, 2013: 342).

And Jeffery urges the academic community:

‘to confront and de-bunk one of the most pervasive, yet perhaps most misleading assumptions in postwar social science: that the nation-state and its institutions are the natural unit of analysis for social scientists’ (Jeffery, 2010: 13).

1.3 Relevance: the problem of accountability in multi-level countries

The literature on federalism has abundantly argued about how the nature of the relationship between electoral arenas contributes to or hinders democratic accountability without arriving at a definitive conclusion. An analysis of the evidence available in the discipline warned about the lack of progress in our understanding of the costs generated by political decentralization (Triesman, 2007).

The normative side of the argument in favour of federalism is well developed and dates back over two centuries ago, when Madison, Hamilton and Jay published ‘The Federalist Papers’. It is widely believed that decentralization is good for democracy (Breton, 2000). Theoretically, one of the main reasons to support decentralization is to increase governmental efficiency and to enhance accountability and responsiveness bringing the government closer to the people (Gagnon, 1993). Nevertheless, previous empirical findings are not conclusive to support the claim that federalism or decentralization leads to more efficient policy making (Biela, Hennl and Kaiser, 2013) or improves the quality of democracy (Lane and Ersson, 2005).

In a democracy, elections are the essential mechanism to hold politicians accountable (Manin, Przeworski, and Stokes, 1999). According to the literature on retrospective voting (Key, 1966; Fiorina, 1981), citizens evaluate the past performance of the government and punish or reward the party or parties in office accordingly when they go to the polls. Elected representatives, in turn, pursue the public interest because they anticipate that they will be judged on the basis of the outcomes of their policies. Yet, this requires ‘clarity of responsibility’, that is, voters should be able to discern who is responsible for what (Powell and Whitten, 1993). By making the lines of responsibility less clear, multi-level governance may potentially pose a threat to this basic mechanism of electoral accountability (Cutler, 2004; Anderson, 2006).

The broader question of ‘contamination’ between electoral arenas has attracted the attention of scholars, who have used different names to refer to similar or related phenomena: spillover effects, coattails, electoral externalities. Particularly, contamination effects have been defined as ‘a situation where either voters or party elites determine their political behaviour on the basis of other arenas, rather than the specific arena being contested’ (Guinjoan, 2014: 19). Thus defined, contamination effects can go in any direction. It may be that developments in sub-national and supra-national politics affect the behaviour of voters or parties in national elections. However, the literature is far more concerned by the impact of national politics on lower and upper levels.

The existence of ‘contamination’ between electoral arenas hinders democratic accountability. The problem arises from the fact that voters reward and punish national, not level-specific, politicians when casting their votes in sub-national and supra-national elections. Although there are some contradictory findings, the literature suggests that regional executives are not held responsible, for instance, for their economic performance. When casting their votes in regional elections, citizens bear in mind the national government’s economic outcomes (Gélineau and Bélanger, 2005; Rodden and Wibbels, 2011). Similarly, local elections are often considered to be just a ‘national referendum’ on the popularity of the country’s government or a ‘barometer’ to predict the results of the subsequent national elections (Curtice and Payne, 1991; Jérôme and Lewis-Beck, 1999). And the prevalent assumption is that elections to the European Parliament are used by voters to send a signal of (dis)satisfaction with the policies implemented by the national governments rather than to express their views on European politics (Reif and Schmitt, 1980; Reif, 1984; Van der Eijk, Franklin and Marsh, 1996; Hix and Marsh, 2007; Hix and Marsh, 2011).

When election results are determined by issues that are beyond the specific arena being contested, accountability does not work properly. This has real-world implications. If citizens do not hold representatives responsible for their actions, the latter would have no incentive to pursue the policy preferences of their constituencies.

1.4 The overlooked role of political parties

By far, research exploring the relationship between electoral arenas has favoured the study of voting behaviour over the analysis of party strategies. By focusing on election results, and consequently on voters' preferences, the literature has generally ignored the role of political parties in contributing to or hinder accountability in multi-level states.

In contexts where political responsibilities are intertwined, policy-makers have an incentive to develop strategies of credit-claiming and blame-avoidance (Weaver, 1986). One can expect that a party seeking re-election at any level will (1) try to evade political responsibility for a policy with negative results (passing the buck to another tier of government) and (2) attempt to take credit for policies with positive effects (regardless of who really implemented these policies). The consequences of opportunistic behaviour on the part of sub-national politicians are well known: fiscal indiscipline (Rodden, 2006), comparative grievance among territories that fuels autonomist or secessionist demands (Alonso, 2012) and programmatic heterogeneity that hampers national governments' ability to implement a coherent agenda (Maddens and Libbrecht, 2009; Alonso and Gómez, 2011).

Party strategies are approached in the first and the second article of this dissertation (chapters 2 and 3) focusing on regional elections, and by a combination of the two most influential accounts of party competition: the spatial and saliency theories (Dolezal *et al.*, 2014). The first theory, based on Downs (1957), interprets competition as party confrontation over the same issues. It predicts that parties, on a given policy dimension, would take the position that maximize its votes. However, strategies can also be defined in terms of saliency (Budge and Farlie, 1983). The key prediction of the saliency theory of electoral competition is that parties compete by highlighting those issues which 'belong' to them. Each party would emphasize those issues in which it has credibility and reputation advantage over its competitors (Meguid, 2008). Rather than mutually exclusive, spatial and saliency theories can be conceived as compatible (Alonso, 2012; Rovny and Edwards, 2012; Elias *et al.*, 2015).

1.5 Breaking through the individual's side

One of the most prominent frameworks to analyze the results of sub-national and supra-national elections is the second-order election model, which was formulated by Reif and Schmitt in 1980. According to this model, elections other than the national presidential or parliamentary elections are second-order contests, whose results can be read as a by-product of the national government popularity. The literature on second-order elections presumes that instead of holding accountable sub-national or supra-national representatives for their actions, citizens decide whether to vote and for whom in sub-national and supra-national elections on the grounds of issues belonging to the first-order national arena.

The second-order election theory does not only ignore the role of political parties and their ability to wilfully subordinate one electoral arena to another in multi-level countries. It is also paradoxical that the predictions of this theory have long remained at the aggregate level even if these predictions are built on assumptions about the behaviour of individuals.

Only after three decades since its original formulation, scholars started to study the 'micro-level foundations' of the second-order election model (Schmitt, Sanz and Braun, 2008; Hobolt and Wittrock, 2011). The third article of this dissertation (chapter 4) aims to contribute to these relatively recent efforts. To this end, instead of addressing party strategies in regional elections, like the previous two articles of this thesis, it turns to voter's behaviour, and it expands the focus to include local and European elections. In the following section the three single contributions are summarized in more detail.

1.6 Overview of the thesis

This is a cumulative dissertation, comprising three articles. Two of them, co-authored with Sonia Alonso (Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar) and Braulio Gómez (University of Deusto), have been published in the academic journals *Party Politics* and *Publius: The Journal of Federalism*, respectively. The third article is single-authored by the doctoral candidate and has

been submitted to the journal *Electoral Studies*, being under peer review at this journal at the moment of the submission of this dissertation.

First article

The first article, entitled ‘Parties’ Electoral Strategies in a Two-Dimensional Political Space: Evidence from Spain and Great Britain’ has been published in *Party Politics* as a part of the special issue ‘Position, selective emphasis and framing: Party competition in multinational democracies’, guest-edited by Anwen Elias, Edina Szöcsik and Christina Zuber. It is, in terms of content, an introductory piece for this dissertation. Methodologically, it tests the versatility of the data generated by the Regional Manifestos Project, that uses quantitative content analysis of electoral manifestos of political parties to estimate their policy positions and preferences in regional elections (see section 1.7 of this introduction). Substantially, it addresses how parties deal with left-right and centre-periphery issues in regional elections.

The objective of this article, co-authored with Sonia Alonso and Braulio Gómez, is to test empirically the theoretical assumptions made by Elias, Szöcsik and Zuber (2015) about the repertoire of party strategies in a two-dimensional political space. In multi-level states, the policy space is characterized by the presence of two major dimensions of competition: the socioeconomic left-right and the territorial centre-periphery. Depending on the stances of the parties on these two dimensions, Elias and her colleagues define a repertoire of four party strategies: a uni-dimensional strategy, a blurring strategy, a subsuming strategy and a two-dimensional strategy. How well these theoretically-derived strategies approximate what parties in a two-dimensional political space really do? Which parties are more likely to use what type of strategy? And under what circumstances? Spain and United Kingdom are selected as case studies. In both countries, devolution has been taking place in a relatively short time period and the regions have achieved a wide range of powers, giving raise to the emergence of successful regionalist parties. Therefore, the Spanish and the British cases are most likely cases for the presence of a two-dimensional political space.

Second article

The second article entitles ‘How National Parties Nationalize Regional Elections: The Case of Spain’ is also co-authored by Sonia Alonso and Braulio Gómez, and it has been published in *Publius: The Journal of Federalism*. This article shows how state-wide parties contribute to the ‘contamination’ between electoral arenas in multi-level states. It is argued that regional branches of state-wide parties strategically (de)emphasize national-level responsibilities during regional election campaigns in order to win votes. Parties frame the regional campaign in national terms under two circumstances: when the co-partisans are in office at the national government in times of good performance, and when the co-partisans are in opposition and the national incumbent party is unpopular.

The empirical evidence comes again from the Regional Manifestos Project, specifically from the quantitative content analysis of the regional party manifestos of the People’s Party (PP) and the Spanish Socialist Workers’ Party (PSOE) between 1998 and 2012. The Spanish case is a quasi-experimental setting, in the sense that we have a period of economic boom immediately followed by a deep economic recession with national and regional elections taking place in-between. This article compares, then, how parties ‘nationalize’ regional elections during a period of economic growth and during an economic crisis.

Third article

The third article, ‘First-Order Thinking in Second-Order Contests: A Comparison of Local, Regional and European Elections’ shifts the focus from parties to voters, and adopts a broader perspective by incorporating not only regional but also local and European elections into the analysis. The aim of this article, single-authored by the doctoral candidate and under review at the journal *Electoral Studies*, is to analyse whether individuals consider issues belonging to the specific arena being contested in three types of the so-called second-order elections, and when they are more likely to do it.

The empirical analysis is based on individual-level data from surveys conducted by the *Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas* (CIS) after the Spanish local,

regional and European between 1999 and 2015. The CIS has systematically asked respondents in these surveys whether national or level-specific issues influence their voting choices in local, regional and European elections. Although this question represents very valuable information, it has been barely used for research purposes. Data from 59 different election surveys have been pooled into three datasets. In the first part of the article, descriptive evidence is reported about the proportion of citizens taking into consideration level-specific issues comparing local, regional and European elections, and how it changes across time. In the second part, logistic regressions are conducted to analyze when individuals are more likely to consider level-specific issues in second-order elections.

1.7 Methodology: The Regional Manifestos Project

The aim of this dissertation is not only to produce substantive conclusions but also to innovate methodologically. Party competition in multi-level states has been scarcely studied so far, due to the lack of available data. Most of this dissertation (the first and the second article) is based on a sophisticated method to measure the preferences of parties in regional elections based on quantitative content analysis of party manifestos.

Although few people read them, election manifestos offer a unique view of political parties' intentions and the image they choose to project to the electorate in order to attract votes. A great deal of literature has been written on the advantages of using election manifestos as the main source to obtain information on political parties' positions and preferences (Alonso, Volkens and Gómez, 2012). These advantages can be summarized as follows:

- 1) Election manifestos are published by the parties' official bodies and represent the position of the entire party, not only that of one person or faction;
- 2) They are published regularly, for each election, allowing to detect shifts over time;

- 3) Manifestos generally cover a broad range of issues, which makes it possible to systematically compare within and across territories the different parties' stances on these issues.
- 4) We have enough empirical evidence about the fact that the parties, once in office, keep most of the electoral pledges contained in their manifestos².

The most used empirical reference in the study of parties' policy positions and preferences based on election programs is the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP/MARPOR). The CMP database offers data of more than 900 political parties in 56 countries since 1945. Nevertheless it has two major pitfalls if one pretends to analyze party competition in multi-level states. As all the large comparative projects studying representative democracies, it only covers national elections and does not provide data on regional manifestos. Moreover, its classification scheme is too crude to measure party positions on the centre-periphery dimension.

During the last seven years the doctoral candidate have collected, coded and analyzed regional election manifestos with the methodology developed by the Regional Manifestos Project (RMP), a research project funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness, under the coordination of Braulio Gómez and Sonia Alonso.

The RMP has adapted the classification scheme of the CMP to multi-level states. The methodology is the same in both cases: the quantitative content analysis of parties' manifestos. The text is divided into quasi-sentences which are coded into one policy category according to a classification scheme that covers a wide range of issues. Once all the text has been coded, the number of quasi-sentences that are dedicated to each policy category is computed and expressed as a percentage over the total number of quasi-sentences in the manifesto (saliency score).

Apart from creating sub-categories that capture regional-level policy preferences, the main advantage of the RMP is that an additional code is added to each quasi-

² About the so named 'program-to-policy linkage', see for example Mansergh and Thomas (2007), 'Election Pledges, Party Competition, and Policymaking', *Comparative Politics* 39(3): 311-329.

sentence in order to distinguish the level of government that it addresses (local, regional, national, European or international) and the preferences about the distribution of competencies/powers (more or less authority for the level of government mentioned).

1.8 A note on the contribution of the doctoral candidate to the co-authored articles

This section describes the specific contribution of the doctoral candidate to the co-authored articles ‘Parties’ Electoral Strategies in a Two-Dimensional Political Space: Evidence from Spain and Great Britain’ and ‘How National Parties Nationalize Regional Elections: The Case of Spain’. Both articles use data from the RMP, and were co-authored by the members of the research team of this project: the doctoral candidate, the coordinator Sonia Alonso, and the principal investigator Braulio Gómez.

Regarding the dataset, the doctoral candidate, Braulio Gómez and Sonia Alonso contributed equally to the development of the coding scheme and instructions employed in the data production process of the RMP, departing from an initial idea of Braulio Gómez. The doctoral candidate was fully responsible of the collection, transformation into electronically codable versions and coding of the manifestos³. Likewise, the doctoral candidate was fully responsible of processing the coded texts, the computation of saliency scores and variables, and the creation and release of the dataset.

Sonia Alonso elaborated a first preliminary draft of the article ‘Parties’ Electoral Strategies in a Two-Dimensional Political Space: Evidence from Spain and Great Britain’, with the support of the doctoral candidate and Braulio Gómez. The doctoral candidate prepared the data and conducted the empirical analysis. After submission to the journal *Party Politics*, the responsibility was transferred to the doctoral candidate, who led the revise and resubmit process and was on charge of the elaboration of the article in its final version. Following the suggestions made

³ A limited number of manifestos were coded by external collaborators of the Regional Manifestos Project under the supervision of the doctoral candidate.

by reviewers, the doctoral candidate re-elaborated the theoretical argumentation, conducted new analysis, and re-wrote the entire article, with the support of Braulio Gómez and Sonia Alonso.

With regards to the second article encompassing this dissertation, ‘How National Parties Nationalize Regional Elections: The Case of Spain’, the doctoral candidate elaborated the theoretical argumentation with the support of Braulio Gómez and Sonia Alonso, prepared the data and conducted the empirical analysis. This article was based on an idea originally presented in a former conference paper in which the doctoral candidate, Sonia Alonso and Braulio Gómez contributed equally.

1.9 References

- Alonso, S. (2012), *Challenging the State: Devolution and the Battle for Partisan Credibility: A Comparison of Belgium, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Alonso, S. and Gómez, B. (2011), 'Partidos nacionales en elecciones regionales: ¿Coherencia territorial o programas a la carta?', *Revista de Estudios Políticos* 152: 183–209.
- Alonso, S., Volkens, A. and Gómez, B. (2012), *Análisis de contenido de textos políticos. Un enfoque cuantitativo*. Madrid: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas.
- Amat, F., Jurado, I. and León, S. (2012), 'Electoral Externalities in Decentralized Parliamentary Democracies', XXII IPSA World Congress of Political Science, July 8-12, Madrid.
- Anderson, C.D. (2006), 'Economic Voting and Multilevel Governance: A Comparative Individual-Level Analysis', *American Journal of Political Science* 50 (2): 449–463.
- Biela, J., Hennl, A. and Kaiser, A. (2013), *Policy Making in Multilevel Systems. Federalism, Decentralisation, and Performance in OECD Countries*. Colchester: ECPR Press.
- Breton, A. (2000), 'Federalism and Decentralization: Ownership Rights and the Superiority of Federalism', *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 30(2): 1-16.
- Budge, I., and Farlie, D.J. (1983), *Explaining and Predicting Elections: Issue Effects and Party Strategies in Twenty-Three Democracies*. London ; Boston: Unwin Hyman.
- Curtice, J., and Payne, C. (1991), 'Local Elections as National Referendums in Great Britain', *Electoral Studies* 10 (1): 3–17.
- Cutler, F. (2004), 'Government Responsibility and Electoral Accountability in Federations', *Publius* 34 (2): 19–38.
- Dolezal, M., Ennser-Jedenastik, L., Müller, W.C. and Winkler, A.C. (2014), 'How Parties Compete for Votes: A Test of Saliency Theory', *European Journal of Political Research* 53 (1): 57–76.
- Downs, A. (1957), *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Eijk, C. Van der, Franklin, M. and Marsh, M. (1996), 'What Voters Teach Us about Europe-Wide Elections: What Europe-Wide Elections Teach Us about Voters', *Electoral Studies* 15 (2): 149–166.

- Elazar, D.J. (1991), *Federal Systems of the World. A handbook of federal, confederal and autonomy arrangements*. Essex: Longman Group UK Limited.
- Elias, A., Szöcsik, E. and Zuber, C.I. (2015), 'Position, Selective Emphasis and Framing How Parties Deal with a Second Dimension in Competition', *Party Politics* 21 (6): 839–850.
- Fabre, E. and Swenden, W. (2013), 'Territorial Politics and the Statewide Party', *Regional Studies* 47 (3): 342–355.
- Fiorina, M. P (1981), *Retrospective Voting in American National Elections*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Gagnon, A.-G. (1993), 'The Political Uses of Federalism', in: Burgess, M. and Gagnon, A.-G., *Comparative Federalism and Federation: Competing Traditions and Future Directions*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 15–44.
- Gélineau, F., and Bélanger, E. (2005) 'Electoral Accountability in a Federal System: National and Provincial Economic Voting in Canada', *Publius* 35 (3): 407–424.
- Gschwend, T. (2008) 'Studying Contamination Effects in Multi-Level Systems of Governance: First Thoughts about Hypotheses and Research Design', in: Eijk, C. Van der and Schmitt, H. (eds), *The Multilevel Electoral System of the EU*, Mannheim: CONNEX, 229–240.
- Guinjoan, M. (2014), *Parties, Elections and Electoral Contests: Competition and Contamination Effects*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing.
- Hix, S. and Marsh, M. (2007), 'Punishment or Protest? Understanding European Parliament Elections', *Journal of Politics* 69 (2): 495–510.
- (2011), 'Second-Order Effects plus Pan-European Political Swings: An Analysis of European Parliament Elections across Time', *Electoral Studies* 30 (1): 4–15.
- Hobolt, S.B. and Wittrock, J. (2011) 'The Second-Order Election Model Revisited: An Experimental Test of Vote Choices in European Parliament Elections', *Electoral Studies* 30 (1): 29–40.
- Hooghe, L., Marks, G. and Schakel, A.H. (2010), *The Rise of Regional Authority: A Comparative Study of 42 Democracies*. London: Routledge.
- Jeffery, C. (2010), 'Multi-Level Party Competition in Federal and Regional States', *Metropolis and Inequalities*, March 24–26, São Paulo.
- Jeffery, C., and Hough, D. (2009), 'Understanding Post-Devolution Elections in Scotland and Wales in Comparative Perspective', *Party Politics* 15 (2): 219–240.

- Jeffery, C., and Schakel, A.H. (2013), 'Insights: Methods and Data Beyond Methodological Nationalism', *Regional Studies* 47 (3): 402–404.
- Jérôme, B., and Lewis-Beck, M.S. (1999), 'Is Local Politics Local? French Evidence', *European Journal of Political Research* 35 (2): 181–197.
- Key, V.O., Jr. 1966. *The Responsible Electorate: Rationality in Presidential Voting, 1936-1960*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Lago-Peñas, I., and Lago-Peñas, S. (2011), *Descentralización y control electoral de los gobiernos en España*. Barcelona: Institut d'Estudis Autònoms.
- Lane, J.E. and Ersson, S. (2005), 'The riddle of federalism: does federalism impact on democracy?', *Democratization* 12(2): 163–182.
- Maddens, B. and Libbrecht, L. (2009), 'How Statewide Parties Cope with the Regionalist Issue: The Case of Spain', in: Swenden, W. and Maddens, B. (eds.), *Territorial Politics in Western Europe*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 204–228.
- Meguid, B.M. (2008), *Party Competition between Unequals: Strategies and Electoral Fortunes in Western Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nicholson, S.P. (2005), *Voting the Agenda: Candidates, Elections and Ballot Propositions*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Powell, G.B. and Whitten, G.D. (1993), 'A Cross-National Analysis of Economic Voting: Taking Account of the Political Context', *American Journal of Political Science* 37 (2): 391–414.
- Reif, K. (1984), 'National Electoral Cycles and European Elections 1979 and 1984', *Electoral Studies* 3 (3): 244–255.
- Reif, K. and Schmitt, H. (1980) 'Nine Second-Order National Elections: a Conceptual Framework for the Analysis of European Election Results', *European Journal of Political Research* 8: 3–44.
- Rodden, J. (2006), *Hamilton's Paradox. The Promise and Peril of Fiscal Federalism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rodden, J. and Wibbels, E. (2011), 'Dual Accountability and the Nationalization of Party Competition: Evidence from Four Federations', *Party Politics* 17 (5): 629–653.
- Rovny, J. and Edwards, E.E. (2012), 'Struggle over Dimensionality Party Competition in Western and Eastern Europe', *East European Politics and Societies* 26 (1): 56–74.
- Schmitt, H., Sanz, A. and Braun, D. (2008), 'The Micro-Foundations of Second-Order Election Theory: Theoretical Reconstructions and Empirical Tests

Based Upon the European Election Study 2004', Comparative Citizen Politics, December 9-11, Manchester.

Triesman, D. (2007), *The Architecture of Government. Rethinking Political Decentralization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Weaver, R.K. (1986), 'The Politics of Blame Avoidance', *Journal of Public Policy* 6 (4): 371–398.

Chapter 2

Parties' Electoral Strategies in a Two-Dimensional Political Space: Evidence from Spain and Great Britain⁴

(with Sonia Alonso and Braulio Gómez)

Abstract

This article has two objectives. Firstly, we test the theoretical assumptions about the repertoire of party strategies in a two-dimensional political space presented in the introduction to this special issue [Elias *et al.*, 2015]. We use a new dataset that content-analyzes electoral parties' manifestos for regional elections in Spain and Great Britain (the Regional Manifestos Project) in order to see how well the theoretically-derived strategies approximate what parties in regional elections really do. Secondly, we develop tentative explanations of parties' strategies: Which parties are more likely to use what type of strategy and under what circumstances? After running a multinomial logistic model we find that, in contrast to the niche party thesis, regionalist parties strategize simultaneously along the territorial and the economic dimensions of competition, while state-wide parties react to the presence of regionalist opponents by incorporating the territorial dimension into the agenda.

⁴ This article is published in *Party Politics* (2015, Vol.21(6): 851-865) as a part of the special issue entitled 'Position, selective emphasis and framing: Party Competition in multinational democracies', guest-edited by Anwen Elias, Edina Szöcsik and Christina Zuber.

2.1 Introduction

We know little about the behaviour of parties in a two-dimensional political space, for two main reasons. The first reason is the assumption, dominant in the field since Downs (1957), according to which mainstream parties subsume all issues, old and new, along an all-encompassing left-right dimension, and limit their strategies to movements along this dimension. This interpretation of party competition was later complemented by the notion of valence issues (Stokes, 1963) and by the idea that parties also strategize by emphasizing issues, positional or valence, in which parties have a reputational or credibility advantage while ignoring issues for which these advantages do not exist (Budge and Farlie, 1983). Under this dominant perspective, competition between new or small parties and mainstream parties is seen as ‘competition between unequals’ (Meguid, 2008), whereby the issues raised by new or small parties (the so-called niche parties: green, extreme right-wing, regionalist, etc.) are either absorbed by mainstream parties and incorporated into the all-encompassing left-right dimension or monopolized by the small and new parties, which then become a stable component of the country’s party system. The second reason is, probably, the most difficult to tackle: there is a gap, almost a black hole, in terms of existing data with which to measure multidimensional political spaces across time, particularly with respect to the territorial dimension. It would not be exaggerated to say that the only cross-national time-series data with which to measure the position of parties along the centre-periphery continuum is the Manifesto Project, and it has two major weaknesses: it only measures national political spaces and its classification scheme is not detailed enough to capture the territorial dimension in all its complexity.

In the introduction to this special issue [Elias *et al.*, 2015], Elias, Szöcsik and Zuber (2015) have developed a theory of party strategies in a two-dimensional space in which the major dimensions of competition are the economic left-right and the territorial centre-periphery. This article focuses on the strategies of parties with regard to these dimensions in regional elections, which is the arena where the issues related to the territorial dimension gain particular relevance. Doing so, this

article addresses two overlooked aspects of party competition, namely the regional level and issues beyond the left-right dimension. Regional elections are usually neglected due to the tendency among political scientists to choose the national level as the unit of analysis. Competition along the issues of the territorial dimension is fundamental in decentralized countries with distinctive ethnic, cultural or linguistic populations and mobilized regionalist parties.

This article has two objectives. First, we want to test the theory of the two-dimensional political space and the repertoire of party strategies defined by Elias *et al.* (2015) in the introduction to this special issue [Elias *et al.*, 2015]. Second, we advance some exploratory hypotheses concerning when and why parties choose which strategy. The first task requires that we develop empirical indicators of saliency, position and blurring along the economic and the territorial dimensions. We do so using a new dataset that content-analyses parties' manifestos for regional elections in Spain (between 1980 and 2012) and Great Britain (2011), the Regional Manifestos Project (RMP).⁵ The reason for using RMP data is that, for the first time, it offers a fine-tuned measurement of the preferences of parties with regards to both the economic and the territorial dimensions in multi-level polities (Alonso *et al.*, 2013).

Our analyses demonstrate that the theoretically-derived strategies are a good description of what parties really do when they compete in regional elections in multinational states. In the sub-national political spaces of Spain and Great Britain, a territorial dimension co-exists with an economic dimension. Specifically, we have found that regionalist parties strategize along the two dimensions simultaneously, while state-wide parties incorporate the issues related with the territorial dimension in their manifestos when they face a regionalist contender.

The article proceeds as follows. Section 2 presents definitions of the main concepts guiding this research. Section 3 introduces the cases and the data. In section 4 we propose an operationalization of saliency, position and blurring along the territorial and the economic dimensions. In section 5 some descriptive results

⁵ For further information and data download please visit: www.regionalmanifestosproject.com.

are shown. Finally, we operationalize party strategies and test some tentative hypotheses: which parties, and under what circumstances, are more likely to use which strategy and why? We end the article with some concluding remarks about our findings and the research agenda opened up before us.

2.2 The repertoire of party strategies in a two-dimensional political space

2.2.1 The economic and the territorial dimensions

In multinational democracies, in which the national constituencies are far from being uniform in terms of identity, the political space is susceptible to be defined by, at least, two major dimensions of competition: an economic dimension and a territorial dimension. To re-cap the discussion in the introduction to this special issue [Elias *et al.*, 2015], the territorial centre-periphery dimension revolves around the dispute for political control over a – peripheral – territory inside the state. This dimension represents a conflict between the parties that want their peripheral territories to be autonomous (or even independent) in order to preserve their ‘national’ and/or ‘cultural’ distinctiveness and the parties that resist peripheral demands to defend the integrity of the state. We refer to the parties whose agenda is to defend the peripheral territory’s differentiation inside the state as ‘regionalist parties’ and to the (regional branches of) parties whose priority is to defend the interests of the state as ‘state-wide parties’.

Regionalist parties, by definition, organize exclusively in their peripheral territory and present candidates to elections – state wide, regional or local – exclusively within it. State-wide parties, in contrast, organize throughout the geography of the state, presenting candidates to state-wide, regional and local elections in all constituencies – or nearly all. State-wide parties may have diverse positions along the centre-periphery dimension; regionalist parties’ preferences only move in one direction, the periphery (Alonso, 2012). However, within the ‘periphery side’ of the centre-periphery dimension, regionalist parties vary greatly in their more radical or moderate positions (De Winter and Türsan, 1998; Massetti, 2009).

The economic left-right dimension is associated with the preferences of parties regarding the role of the state in managing the economy. It can be defined as a continuum along which these preferences are ordered from those most favourable to the intervention of the government in the economy to those which prioritize a lean state and economic freedom.⁶ Parties on the economic right want less government intervention, lower taxes, less regulation and privatization of state assets. Parties on the economic left prefer an active role of the government in the economy, more regulation in order to reduce inequalities caused by the market and higher taxes. These meanings are widely shared across time and place (Elias *et al.*, 2015; Marks *et al.*, 2006: 156–157).

2.2.2 The repertoire of party strategies

Parties compete for votes by emphasising those issues in which they have credibility and reputational advantage over their competitors. These issues constitute the party's primary dimension of competition. However, in two-dimensional political spaces each party will also face a secondary dimension of competition. This dimension structures competition along a set of issues which are not a fundamental part of the party's identity but which may become unavoidable for the party at particular elections, depending on the distribution of voters' preferences and on the behaviour of the other parties (Alonso, 2012: 19). According to Elias *et al.* (2015), parties in a two-dimensional space combine saliency and position in both the primary and secondary dimensions to arrive at four main strategies.

The first one is the one-dimensional strategy: '[P]arties position themselves, and give salience to, the dimension they are most invested in and that is associated with their core issues; at the same time they may dismiss the dimension that is of

⁶ In defining the left-right dimension in exclusively economic terms, we endorse the decision of Elias *et al.* (2015) to exclude the social dimension from the analysis. The social dimension is problematic not only because it seems to be independent of the economic dimension, as correlation analyses not shown here demonstrate, but also because there are no 'social' right-wing manifestos in our dataset. All the manifestos analysed here are left-leaning on social issues. Only economic issues differentiate between left-wing and right-wing positions. This confirms previous results by Benoit and Däubler (2014) at the national level, according to which the pro-welfare issue category 'contributes much less to separating left from right parties' (Benoit and Däubler, 2014: 31). Welfare is, therefore, a valence issue, not a positional one.

secondary importance to them' (Elias *et al.*, 2015). For state-wide parties this strategy implies that they ignore territorial issues while they focus their political stands on their core economic issues. For regionalist parties, it means exactly the same, only in this case they ignore economic issues to concentrate on the centre-periphery dimension. They signal their electoral strategies by moving along their respective primary dimensions of competition, by converging towards – or diverging from – the rival party's position (Downs, 1957).

In two-dimensional spaces, however, the presence of an economic and a territorial dimension allows parties to define their electoral moves not just on their primary dimension of competition, but by using strategic repositioning on the secondary dimension as well. The secondary dimension can be used as a complement – or compensatory mechanism – to the first. The use of salient positions simultaneously along the primary and secondary dimensions of competition is the two-dimensional strategy. This strategy also implies that the positions displayed along each dimension are not blurred but clear and consistent.

The one-dimensional strategy is the default strategy for both state-wide and regionalist parties. Parties, however, are not rigid in their electoral moves and they will abandon their default strategy whenever a new competition scenario unfolds that makes an adaptation necessary. In this respect, we reject the idea that only mainstream (i.e. state-wide) parties react to changes in the competitive circumstances of the political system. Unlike those analyses that categorize regionalist parties as niche parties that have no incentive to move beyond their core territorial dimension (Adams *et al.*, 2006; Meguid, 2008), we defend that regionalist parties do not limit their appeals to centre-periphery issues (Alonso, 2012; Elias, 2009; Zuber, 2012). The decision to emphasize or downplay territorial issues with respect to other types of issues is a strategic one and depends on the structure of party competition in each particular context. This applies to state-wide and regionalist parties alike. There is no difference between regionalist and state-wide parties in their predispositions to act strategically.

The third strategy is the blurring of positions along the secondary dimension. Parties, even when they want to concentrate on their core issues, 'may not want to

ignore secondary issues completely' (Elias *et al.*, 2015) because these issues have become so salient in the political space that dismissing them would be risky in terms of vote shares. Therefore, they address these issues, which are of secondary importance to them, but in such a way that the position is ambiguous, or even contradictory, so as not to divide their electorate on their core issues (Rovny, 2013). This strategy is facilitated by the fact that parties have more room for manoeuvre in their secondary dimension of competition than in their primary one. In the latter, lack of integrity or responsibility could be more severely punished (Alonso, 2012).

The fourth and final strategy defined by Elias *et al.* (2015) consists in subsuming issues belonging to the secondary dimension into the parties' primary dimension. The implication is, therefore, that parties will try to frame issues in core-dimension terms (Basile, 2012; 2015).

2.3 Data and cases

Our analysis relies on data from the RMP, which content-analyses parties' manifestos written for regional-level elections using a very similar methodology to the one developed by MARPOR⁷ (previously, Comparative Manifestos Project) for national elections. The text unit of analysis is the quasi-sentence. All the quasi-sentences of a manifesto are coded into one policy category (i.e. issue) according to a classification scheme which covers a wide range of policy fields. Once the whole manifesto has been coded, the number of quasi-sentences that are dedicated to each category is computed and expressed as a percentage of the total number of quasi-sentences in the manifesto.

MARPOR and the RMP share the same assumptions and methodology. However, whereas MARPOR was designed to analyse national manifestos, the RMP has adapted MARPOR's methodology to multi-level polities. The main difference between MARPOR and the RMP is that the latter adapts the former's national-level classification scheme to sub-national elections by: (a) introducing an additional two-digit code that captures territorial preferences; and (b) creating

⁷ Manifesto Research on Party Representation: <https://manifestoproject.wzb.eu/>.

sub-categories to capture some issues that are particular of political competition in sub-national elections. The two-digit territorial codes, to be applied in each quasi-sentence, identify the level of government – local, regional, national, European or international – and the preferences of parties regarding the distribution of powers (more or less authority to the addressed level of government in a given policy issue).

Our analysis discusses evidence from Spain and Great Britain. These countries have been selected because they are the most likely cases for the presence of a two-dimensional political space. This is highly relevant for an article whose main objective is to serve as a theory-building tool; there would be little to explain in the absence of a two-dimensional space. There are three main reasons that make these two countries perfect candidates for the presence of two dimensions of party competition. First, they are characterized by heterogeneous populations in terms of history, language and culture. Second, they have undergone devolution reforms, leading to an increase of the autonomy of their regions. Third, some regionalist parties in these countries, especially in Catalonia, the Basque Country and Scotland, are among the most successful in Europe. This poses a particular challenge to state-wide parties which have to compete with regionalist parties in local, regional and national elections. In combination, these factors are likely to encourage the saliency of the territorial dimension in the political space.

Table 1
Number of cases

Spain (17 Autonomous Communities) 1980-2012 regional elections		Great Britain (Scotland and Wales) 2011 regional elections	
People's Party	49	Conservative Party	2
Spanish Socialist Workers' Party	50	Labour Party	2
Regionalist parties	27	Regionalist parties	2

In Spain, the RMP data cover 17 Autonomous Communities and different electoral periods between 1980 and 2012, although, since the dataset is still incomplete, not all electoral periods are fully covered for all the regions (for a detailed list of cases, see Appendix). The Spanish parties included are the regional branches of the main state-wide parties, People's Party (PP) and Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), and the largest regionalist parties in each region. The British manifestos included are those belonging to the regional branches of the Labour Party and the Conservative Party, and the largest regionalist parties for the 2011 regional elections in Scotland and Wales.⁸

The total number of cases in the dataset is 132, 103 of which are state-wide parties' manifestos and 29 of which are regionalist parties' manifestos (Table 1). To tackle the problem of having an unbalanced sample of Spanish and British parties, we show all the results disaggregated by country and, in the final statistical model, we include a dummy variable for Great Britain in order to avoid the results being totally driven by the much more numerous group of parties from Spain.

2.4 Operationalizing saliency, position and blurring

Our first step is to operationalize both the economic and the territorial dimensions in order to measure the saliency and position of parties, as well as the extent to which the position is clear and coherent throughout the manifesto. To do so, we select the content-analysis categories that, according to our definitions, constitute each dimension. A detailed list of the categories belonging to each dimension can be found in the Appendix.

The saliency of the territorial dimension is calculated as the percentage of quasi-sentences in a manifesto assigned to 'centre' and 'periphery' categories. The calculation of the saliency of the economic dimension follows exactly the same procedure with the issues that belong to economic 'left' and 'right'. Theoretically,

⁸ Manual coding of party manifestos is an extremely time-consuming task. We do not include (or randomly select) the universe of political parties in regional elections in Spain and Great Britain. Therefore, this article is limited in the generality of its results.

the saliency of any given dimension thus calculated ranges from 0, for a party manifesto that completely ignores the dimension, to 100, for a party manifesto that dedicates all its sentences to the issues of the dimension.

The position of parties along the different dimensions is computed following the ‘standard’ procedure (Budge, 2013) employed by MARPOR, that is, by subtracting the percentages belonging to opposite categories. These scales order the parties’ positions along two continuums from economic left to economic right and from centre to periphery, theoretically ranging from –100, for a manifesto exclusively dedicated to pro-centre (or economic left-wing) arguments, to 100, for a manifesto totally devoted to pro-periphery (or economic right-wing) arguments.⁹

The position scores so obtained do not simply reflect the relative weight of pro-centre (or economic right-wing) categories with respect to pro-periphery (or economic left-wing) ones, but are also influenced by the total content of the manifesto (i.e. its size), given that the two terms of the formula are the aggregation of saliency scores. For example, if a party dedicates 20 sentences to periphery issues and 50 sentences to centre ones in a manifesto made up of 100 sentences, the position of that party on the centre-periphery scale would be –30 (20% – 50%). If the same party increased the size of the manifesto by adding another 100 sentences not related to the territorial dimension, its position in this scale would increase to –15 (10% – 25%) although the absolute quantity of centre and periphery statements would have remained equal. The same applies to the economic dimension.

Alternative measures have been proposed to solve this problem. For instance, Kim and Fording (2002) estimate the position of parties on the left-right scale using in the denominator the total number of right and left sentences, instead of the total number of sentences of the manifesto. Lowe *et al.* (2011) lean towards a scaling method based on log odds-ratios. Nevertheless, we opt here for computing

⁹ One can get a zero positional score in two very different situations: when parties place themselves in the centre of the dimension (pro- and con-sentences cancel each other out) and when parties do not discuss the issues at all (saliency = 0). In order to avoid collapsing these two situations in one, we calculate the positional score conditional on the saliency scores being greater than 0.

positional scores following the standard approach. There are three reasons justifying our choice. First, the standard method is already appropriate for the purposes of this article. A party that devotes only a few sentences to express its position along the centre-periphery dimension should not have the same position score as a party that devotes half of the manifesto to the issues belonging to this cleavage. Second, some reasons have been pointed out for not using the alternative scales as standard measures of the position of parties. According to Budge (2013), the method proposed by Kim and Fording has the effect of ‘forcing the scores to the extremes’, while the logit ratio scale implies a ‘rather arbitrary data assumption in place of a data fact’ (Budge, 2013: 6). Third, and probably the most convincing argument, in our dataset the correlation between the standard economic left-right scale and both alternative methods is higher than 0.9. For the centre-periphery dimension, the correlation between the standard and the logit ratio scale is also very high (0.88). With regard to the proposal by Kim and Fording the correlation is lower (0.43) but still significant and in the correct direction. Consequently, it can be safely assumed that the choice of one or another scaling method will not have a large effect on the results.

Finally, we measure positional blurring as the simultaneous presence of pro- and con-arguments over the same issue. Just as important as assessing the position of the parties, is to measure the extent in which these positions are clearly conveyed. A party may have different reasons to portray ambiguous or contradictory messages (Lo *et al.*, 2016). A blurred position may be useful to accommodate internal divergent preferences of party factions or to strategically attract voters with different viewpoints. The idea here is that a manifesto that is clear and consistent in its position should not include simultaneously opposite categories (i.e. sentences both in favour and against a particular policy issue). Manifestos, however, are seldom totally consistent. In order to measure how much blurring a manifesto conveys in each dimension of competition we subtract pro- and con-arguments (i.e. periphery and centre, or economic left and right) and then we

divide this figure in absolute values by the total number of quasi-sentences assigned to the dimension.¹⁰

This variable ranges from 1, for a completely clear position (no mixture of centre and periphery arguments, or economic right and left ones), to 0, for a completely blurred position. Since it takes into account the total salience of pro- and con-sentences in the denominator, it tells us nothing about how important the issue is for the party;¹¹ it only reflects the extent to which pro- and con-sentences are mixed in a manifesto. Table 2 summarizes all the formulas.

Table 2

Operationalization of saliency, position and blurring along the two dimensions

	Territorial dimension	Economic dimension	Theoretical range
Saliency	$S_{terr} = \frac{P + C}{N}$	$S_{econ} = \frac{R + L}{N}$	From 0 to 100
Position	$P_{terr} = \frac{P - C}{N}$	$P_{econ} = \frac{R - L}{N}$	From -100 to 100
Blurring	$B_{terr} = \frac{ P - C }{P + C}$	$B_{econ} = \frac{ R - L }{R + L}$	From 0 to 1

Where:

P = Number of quasi-sentences in a manifesto assigned to the ‘periphery’ categories

C = Number of quasi-sentences in a manifesto assigned to the ‘centre’ categories

R = Number of quasi-sentences in a manifesto assigned to the ‘economic right’ categories

L = Number of quasi-sentences in a manifesto assigned to the ‘economic left’ categories

N = Total number of quasi-sentences in a manifesto

¹⁰ This operationalization of ‘blurring’ has two limitations: (1) it covers only partially the phenomenon as described in the introduction of this volume (Elias *et al.*, 2015), addressing only one aspect (i.e. contradictory positions), but not the others (vagueness and ambiguity) and (2) it may be difficult to distinguish it from a moderate position.

¹¹ A party manifesto can have a score of 1 (total consistency) with a low saliency score as well as with a high saliency score.

2.5 Mapping the preferences of political parties

Before moving towards the explanatory analysis of party strategies, we present a description of saliency, position and blurring of Spanish and British parties along the two dimensions of competition. We take into account the type of party according to the territorial orientation (regionalist or state-wide) and, for the latter, the competitive situation in the region (presence or absence of regionalist contenders). This last distinction only applies to the Spanish regions because in Scotland and Wales state-wide parties always face competition from regionalist parties.

2.5.1 Saliency

We interpret saliency scores in relative terms rather than absolute ones, looking at the relative weight of territorial issues *vis-à-vis* economic ones. To do so we have computed a ratio between the saliency of the two dimensions of political competition. The greater than 1 the ratio, the more relevant is the economic dimension relative to the territorial dimension; the lower than 1, the more relevant the territorial dimension. A value of 1 indicates that both dimensions are equally relevant.

Both in Spain and Great Britain, the ratio is below 1 for regionalist parties, and well above 3 for state-wide parties (Table 3). This is exactly what we should find if our hypothesis about the existence of a primary and a secondary dimension were true. The data show that the territorial dimension is the primary dimension for regionalist parties whereas the economic dimension is the primary dimension for state-wide parties. Furthermore, for the Spanish case, there are also differences between state-wide parties depending on the regional competitive situation. The existence of peripheral opponents in the region (i.e. regionalist parties) encourages state-wide parties to give salience to the territorial dimension. This fact can be linked to the idea of ‘party-system agenda’ developed by Green-Pedersen and Mortensen (2010; 2015). According to this concept, parties not only address issues in which they have a competitive advantage over their rivals, but also must respond to the issues that other parties emphasize. Thus, the territorial dimension

receives the attention of state-wide parties in party systems with the presence of relevant regionalist parties.

Table 3

Summary statistics of saliency of the economic and territorial dimensions

Territorial dimension *		Observ.	Mean	S.D.	Min.	Max.
Spain	Regionalist parties	27	12.49	5.72	2.69	23.28
	SWP facing regionalist	72	3.44	2.58	0.00	14.47
	SWP not facing reg.	27	2.53	1.98	0.00	6.64
Great Britain	Regionalist parties	2	10.41	4.48	7.24	13.58
	SWP facing regionalist	4	3.75	3.75	.78	9.17
	SWP not facing reg.	-	-	-	-	-
Economic dimension		Observ.	Mean	S.D.	Min.	Max.
Spain	Regionalist parties	27	7.11	3.45	2.74	17.12
	SWP facing regionalist	72	7.97	3.59	.90	18.57
	SWP not facing reg.	27	8.91	3.42	2.90	18.40
Great Britain	Regionalist parties	2	5.98	1.14	5.17	6.79
	SWP facing regionalist	4	8.35	4.14	3.11	13.21
	SWP not facing reg.	-	-	-	-	-
Ratio *		Observ.	Mean	S.D.	Min.	Max.
Spain	Regionalist parties	27	.77	.81	.20	4.33
	SWP facing regionalist	71	3.63	3.33	.30	19.67
	SWP not facing reg.	25	5.62	4.87	1.26	21.40
Great Britain	Regionalist parties	2	.61	.15	.50	.71
	SWP facing regionalist	4	5.93	7.61	.89	17.00
	SWP not facing reg.	-	-	-	-	-

* Statistically significant at .01 level (One-way ANOVA)

Table 3 also shows that, even if territorial issues constitute the core issues of regionalist parties, the economic dimension is also very relevant for them. In fact, the differences in the saliency of the economic dimension by type of party are not statistically significant. Regionalist parties give as much emphasis as state-wide parties to economic issues. This speaks against the niche party thesis and proves correct our intuition that regionalist parties in fact engage in a two-dimensional strategy. We will have the opportunity to test this hypothesis later on, when we move on to the exploratory analysis of the strategies of parties.

2.5.2 Position

Unsurprisingly, the position of regionalist parties in the territorial dimension is, by far, much more pro-periphery than the position of state-wide parties (Table 4). More interesting is the fact that there is a lot of variation in the position of state-wide parties, particularly among those which face a regionalist challenger. In the Spanish case, their position score in the territorial dimension ranges from -3.87 (a pro-centre position) to 14.04 (a pro-periphery position).

With regard to the position along the economic dimension, Table 4 shows that there are not statistically significant differences between regionalist and state-wide parties. Indeed, regionalist parties in Spain show as heterogeneous preferences as state-wide parties regarding the role of the state in the economy. In Great Britain both regionalist parties, the Scottish National Party and Plaid Cymru, have an economic left-wing manifesto.

We can look more closely at the position of the parties in the economic and the territorial dimensions in Figure 1. These three graphs show how parties are spread along the two-dimensional political space. We have drawn a linear trendline in each graph to see whether the positions along the economic and the territorial dimensions are related to each other.

Regionalist parties are spread not only along the territorial dimension (according to the intensity of their peripheral demands), but also along the economic one (Figure 1.1). Unlike previous research that concludes that the radicalism of the

secessionist demands among regionalist parties is associated with left-wing positions (Masseti and Schakel, 2014), our data suggest that this relationship does not exist. Regionalist parties in the Spanish regions can be found anywhere along the economic dimension. In Great Britain, as we have already observed in Table 3, both regionalist parties are placed on the left side of the economic scale.

Table 4

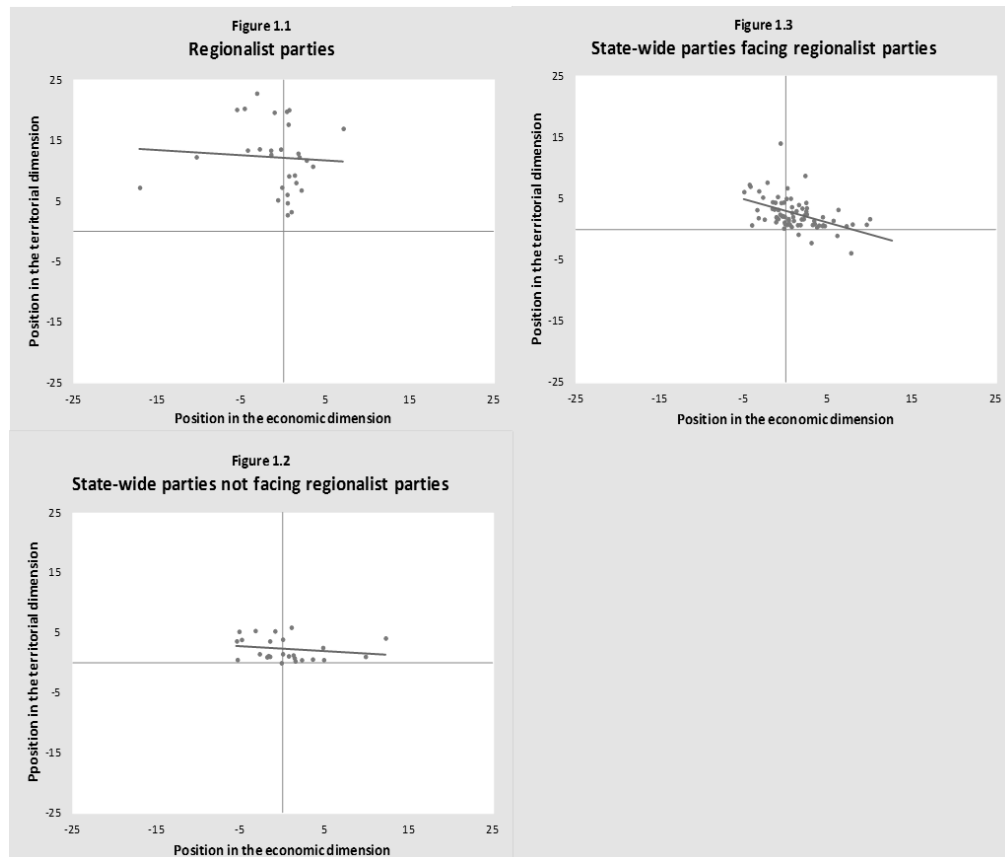
Summary statistics of position along the economic and territorial dimensions

Territorial dimension *		Observ.	Mean	S.D.	Min.	Max.
Spain	Regionalist parties	27	12.30	5.81	2.69	22.78
	SWP facing regionalist	71	2.51	2.57	-3.87	14.04
	SWP not facing reg.	25	2.22	1.89	-.05	5.87
Great Britain	Regionalist parties	2	10.41	4.48	7.24	13.58
	SWP facing regionalist	4	3.64	3.55	.78	8.75
	SWP not facing reg.	-	-	-	-	-
Economic dimension		Observ.	Mean	S.D.	Min.	Max.
Spain	Regionalist parties	27	-.90	4.62	-17.12	7.10
	SWP facing regionalist	72	1.23	3.31	-4.98	12.62
	SWP not facing reg.	27	.67	4.36	-5.48	12.24
Great Britain	Regionalist parties	2	-1.54	1.88	-2.87	-.21
	SWP facing regionalist	4	1.92	5.59	-3.27	9.59
	SWP not facing reg.	-	-	-	-	-

** Statistically significant at .01 level (One-way ANOVA)

Figure 1

Position of parties along the economic and the territorial dimensions



2.5.3 Blurring

Parties' positions are not as clear along the economic dimension of competition as we had expected (Table 5). Regionalist parties blur less along their primary dimension of competition, the territorial dimension, than along their secondary one, the economic dimension. Nevertheless, the same is true for state-wide parties. They also blur more along the economic dimension than along the territorial one. In fact, there are not statistically significant differences between state-wide and regionalist parties in their tendency to blur along the economic dimension. Irrespective of the type of party, they show on average high levels of blurring in their economic preferences. By contrast, parties blur little along the territorial dimension of competition, especially if they are regionalist parties. To

sum up the findings in Table 5, we can say that, across the board, there is more economic blurring than blurring along the territorial dimension. Parties show clear centre-periphery positions while tending to blur their economic stances.

Table 5

Summary statistics of blurring along the economic and territorial dimensions

Territorial dimension *		Observ.	Mean	S.D.	Min.	Max.
Spain	Regionalist parties	27	.97	.07	.75	1.00
	SWP facing regionalist	71	.80	.25	.09	1.00
	SWP not facing reg.	25	.78	.29	.09	1.00
Great Britain	Regionalist parties	2	1.00	.00	1.00	1.00
	SWP facing regionalist	4	.99	.02	.95	1.00
	SWP not facing reg.	-	-	-	-	-
Economic dimension		Observ.	Mean	S.D.	Min.	Max.
Spain	Regionalist parties	27	.36	.28	.03	1.00
	SWP facing regionalist	72	.31	.24	.01	1.00
	SWP not facing reg.	27	.35	.29	.00	1.00
Great Britain	Regionalist parties	2	.23	.27	.04	.42
	SWP facing regionalist	4	.42	.21	.28	.73
	SWP not facing reg.	-	-	-	-	-

** Statistically significant at .01 level (One-way ANOVA)

2.6 Explaining parties' strategies in a two-dimensional space

2.6.1 Operationalizing party strategies

We have constructed a categorical variable which compiles the different strategies of the parties by merging saliency and positional blurring on the economic and the territorial dimensions. The possible values for this variable are 1 (one-dimensional

strategy), 2 (two-dimensional strategy) and 3 (blurring strategy). We have defined the one-dimensional strategy as the one by which the party emphasizes exclusively or mostly issues from its primary dimension of competition, while the secondary dimension is ignored. Hence, the variable takes the value 1 under two situations: a) when a regionalist party gives saliency mainly to the territorial dimension setting aside the economic dimension, and b) when a state-wide party emphasizes the economic dimension pushing the territorial dimension into the background. The two-dimensional strategy is defined as that which consists in emphasizing issues from the party's primary and secondary dimensions simultaneously. Hence, the variable takes the value 2 if a party clearly defines its position along the economic and the territorial scales, giving importance to both dimensions. Finally, the variable takes the value 3 whenever a) a regionalist party tends to adopt a blurred position along the economic dimension, or b) a state-wide party does the same along the territorial dimension.¹² Unfortunately, our data cannot measure framing in the way it has been defined in Elias *et al.* (2015) because it is a rhetorical strategy that cannot be captured by our classification scheme.

According to this variable, most of the Spanish and British parties analysed here adopt a two-dimensional strategy (52%), nearly 29% ignore the secondary dimension of competition carrying out a one-dimensional strategy and the remaining 19% opt for the blurring strategy. In the next section we examine which parties are more likely to use what type of strategy and when.

2.6.2 An exploratory analysis

This section is an exploratory exercise to generate hypotheses for future research. Based on the parties' expected behaviour along their primary and secondary dimensions of competition, we will now test some predictors commonly used to explain party strategies in the literature on party competition and territorial

¹² The following benchmarks are chosen: we consider that a party is blurring its position on its secondary dimension if our indicator blurring as defined in section 4 is below 0.5; we consider that a party emphasizes both dimensions when the proportion between the dimensions is at least 20–80 and there is no blurring in the secondary dimension; we consider that a party sets aside a dimension when this proportion is not reached. The categories are mutually exclusive.

politics (Alonso and Gómez, 2011; Hough and Jeffery, 2006; Massetti, 2009; Meguid, 2008; Swenden and Maddens, 2009). We believe some of these variables could also explain under what circumstances parties are more likely to use one or another of the three hypothesized strategies. We do a pooled data analysis, thereby ignoring the panel structure of our data (cross section-time-series), because we still lack the complete dataset.¹³ The independent variables that we use for the regression model are the following:

- (1) Type of party according to the territorial orientation and competitive situation, made up of three categories: 1 (regionalist parties), 2 (state-wide parties that compete with relevant regionalist parties) and 3 (state-wide parties that do not compete with relevant regionalist parties).¹⁴ We create two dummy variables for 1 and 2. The reference category is 3.
- (2) Type of party according to the economic orientation (with value 0 for left-wing parties and 1 for right-wing parties).¹⁵
- (3) Incumbency (with value 1 if the party was in government at the time of writing the manifesto and 0 otherwise).
- (4) Party's vote gain/loss with respect to the previous election (calculated as the difference between the percentage of vote at time t and the percentage of vote at time $t-1$).
- (5) The economic situation measured by the regional unemployment rate.
- (6) A dummy variable for the Spanish historical regions, which are also those regions in which the regional elections are not held simultaneously.
- (7) A dummy variable for the parties from Great Britain.
- (8) The strength of regionalist parties in the region measured as their number of seats in the regional assembly (only relevant for state-wide parties facing regionalist contenders).

¹³ The implication is that the regression analysis' assumption about the absence of autocorrelation among the independent variables might be violated.

¹⁴ A relevant regionalist party is defined as one that has obtained at least once since 1980 a seat in the regional parliament.

¹⁵ Right parties are the Spanish PP, the British Conservatives and, among regionalist parties, CIU, PNV, CC, PAR, PRC and PR. Left parties are the PSOE, Labour and, among regionalist parties, ERC, CUP, EHB, BNG, AGE, SNP and PC. See Appendix for acronyms.

The dependent variable is the one described in section 6.1. As this variable is categorical and has more than two values, we perform a multinomial logistic regression. We set the reference category in the first value (one-dimensional strategy), comparing therefore the other two categories with it. We run two models. In the first model we include the independent variables from (1) to (7). In the second model we add the independent variable (8) as an interaction with the dummy variable for the group of state-wide parties facing regionalist contenders. We do this to check whether the strength of regionalist parties, and not just their presence, influences the strategic behaviour of state-wide parties. The results are shown in Table 6.

Of all the independent variables introduced in the analysis, only the type of party according to the territorial orientation, the type of party according to the ideological orientation and the control variable indicating whether the region is an historical one seem to predict which strategy is adopted. Neither the economic situation nor the incumbency status or the party's electoral gain/loss is a good predictor.

With regard to the type of party according to the economic orientation, the slope is significant and positive for the blurring strategy in the first model. This implies that the relative probability of adopting a blurring strategy rather than a one-dimensional strategy is higher for right-wing parties than for left-wing parties. Competing in a historical region increases the party's likelihood of following both the two-dimensional and the blurring strategies instead of the one-dimensional strategy. Figure 2 shows the predicted probabilities of choosing each strategy by type of party according to the territorial orientation.

Table 6
Multinomial logistic regression models for Parties' strategies

	Model 1		Model 2	
	Two-dim	Blurring	Two-dim.	Blurring
Vote gain/loss	0.064 (0.04)	-0.025 (0.06)	0.056 (0.04)	-0.011 (0.07)
Unemployment rate	-0.045 (0.04)	-0.021 (0.06)	-0.050 (0.04)	-0.013 (0.06)
Type of party (territorial)				
Regionalist	2.075 (1.28)	3.437** (1.38)	3.661 (2.32)	5.150** (2.31)
SWP facing regionalist	1.428** (0.61)	-0.080 (1.05)	1.816*** (0.66)	-0.393 (1.20)
SWP not facing reg. (ref.)	-	-	-	-
Type of party (ideological)				
Right-wing	-0.812 (0.54)	1.515* (0.86)	-0.847 (0.55)	1.411 (0.87)
Left-wing (ref.)	-	-	-	-
Incumbency	0.320 (0.52)	0.421 (0.78)	0.163 (0.54)	0.498 (0.81)
Historical region	2.582** (1.09)	3.171** (1.24)	4.312** (1.74)	4.347** (1.89)
Great Britain	-1.614 (1.21)	1.114 (1.46)	-0.089 (1.66)	2.157 (1.96)
Seats regionalist parties	-	-	-0.072 (0.05)	-0.069 (0.05)
Seats regionalist parties × SWP facing regionalist	-	-	0.028 (0.04)	0.062 (0.05)
Intercept	0.187 (0.79)	-2.773* (1.43)	0.344 (0.80)	-2.866 (1.52)
N	114		114	
Missing cases	18		18	
Pseudo R ²	0.3106		0.3411	

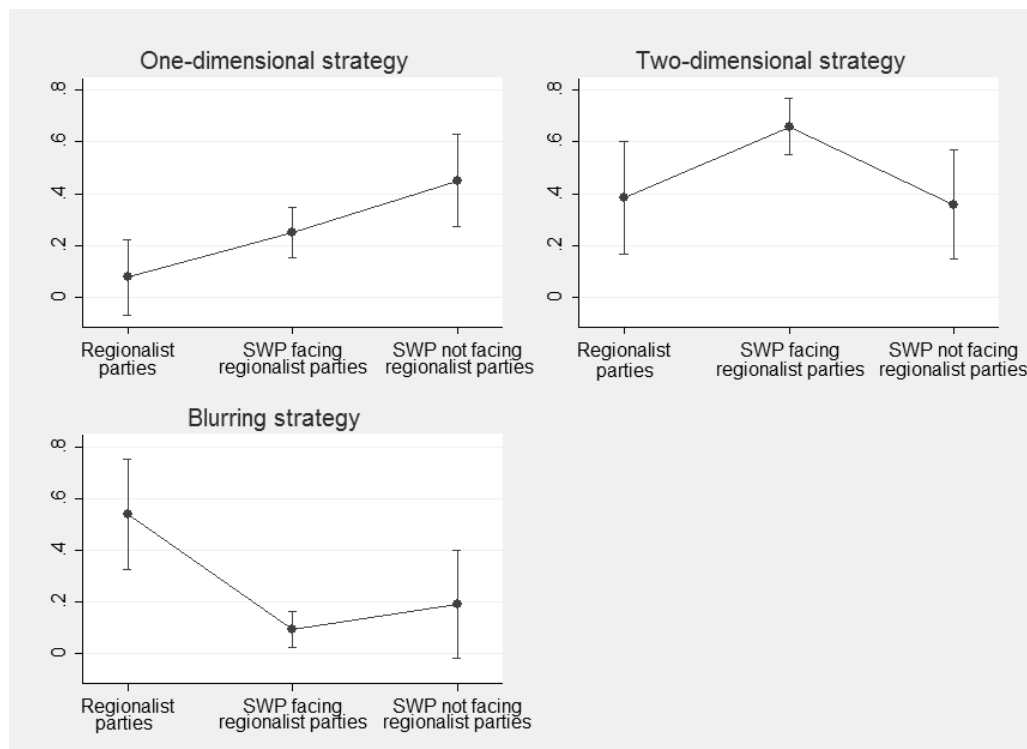
***p < 0.01; **p < 0.05; *p < 0.10 (two-tailed tests).

Dependent variable: Strategies of parties = (1) One-dimensional strategy (category of reference); (2) Two-dimensional strategy; (3) Blurring strategy

According to our results, regionalist parties are more likely to opt for the blurring strategy. The probability of pursuing a two-dimensional strategy is higher for state-wide parties that face a regionalist party. In this regard, the strength of regionalist parties, measured as the number of seats in the regional assembly, does not make a difference.¹⁶ The interaction in model 2 is not statistically significant. The probability of state-wide parties pursuing one or another strategy is influenced by the presence of regionalist parties but not by the number of seats that the latter hold in the regional parliament. In the absence of such a contender, state-wide parties are more likely to opt for the one-dimensional strategy.

Figure 2

Predicted probabilities of parties' strategies (with 95% CI)



Note: Predicted from the multinomial logistic regression results in Table 6 (Model 1)

¹⁶ We have run a third model selecting the state-wide parties and replacing the variable (1) type of party (territorial orientation) by the variable (8) number of seats of regionalist parties. We obtained the same result.

2.7 Conclusions

This article had two main objectives. The first was to test the theory about the repertoire of party strategies in a two-dimensional political space. The second was to develop some tentative explanations of the circumstances in which the parties use one or another strategy. We conclude with a summary of what we have found, highlighting some possible directions for a new research agenda based on these findings.

First, we have confirmed the co-existence of a territorial and an economic dimension in the sub-national political spaces of Spain and Great Britain in which there are relevant regionalist parties competing for votes with state-wide parties. In regions without a peripheral challenger, the territorial dimension is dominated by the economic one. We have also confirmed the existence of a primary and a secondary dimension of competition for all the parties in the dataset, defined by their core and secondary issues respectively. For regionalist parties, the primary dimension of competition is the territorial one; for state-wide parties, it is the economic dimension.

Second, we have developed empirical indicators for measuring saliency, position and the extent of blurring along the economic and, most importantly, along the territorial dimension. This has allowed us to construct a variable that reflects three of the four strategies defined in the introduction to this volume (Elias *et al.*, 2015). We have found that these theoretically-derived strategies are a good description of what parties really do. Parties engage in one-dimensional, two-dimensional and blurring strategies as measured by our developed indicators. The parties' strategic choice depends mainly on the type of party according to the territorial orientation. Regionalist parties engage mostly in blurring and two-dimensional strategies. They blur less along their primary dimension of competition, the territorial dimension, than along their secondary one, the economic dimension, and they do not use the one-dimensional strategy. Therefore, regionalist parties behave as predicted: against the niche party thesis, regionalist parties strategize along the two dimensions simultaneously.

State-wide parties behave according to the competitive situation in the region. This means that regionalist parties not only shape directly the space of political competition by raising ‘new’ issues and conforming to a bi-dimensional space, but also influence the behaviour and the agenda of state-wide parties, which in some circumstances are compelled not to neglect the territorial dimension. State-wide parties use the two-dimensional strategy more often when they face a regionalist challenger in the regional arena. It remains an open question whether this finding applies to the national level. Does the presence of regionalist parties in national elections automatically make state-wide parties pay attention to the territorial dimension? According to the RMP data, state-wide parties give more saliency to the issues belonging to the territorial dimension in regional manifestos than in national ones. This suggests that in national elections state-wide parties may respond in a different way to the presence of regionalist opponents. Nevertheless, only future research can answer this question.

The type of party according to the ideological orientation also matters for explaining which strategy is preferred in regional elections. Right-wing parties are more likely to adopt a blurring strategy. We attribute this result to the fact that the Spanish and British conservative parties, due to their centralist tradition, may have more difficulties to accommodate their proposals to the regional arena without contravening the identity of their national branch. On the one hand, they have a consolidated reputation as preservers of the national cohesion and territorial unity, which plays against the credibility of their autonomist proposals. On the other, to defend a pro-centre position on regions whose citizens have a dual national identity and/or a distinctive culture or language may not be the better option for running a regional election. Therefore, blurring along the territorial dimension of competition appears to be an appropriate alternative.

Finally, parties that compete in a historical region are more likely to give salience to the territorial dimension and to engage, therefore, in blurring and two-dimensional strategies. However, the party’s vote gains and losses do not affect the probability of choosing one or another strategy. Our results also suggest that

the economic situation of the region does not have any influence on the parties' strategies in a two-dimensional political space.

We have found no other predictors that could explain better the strategies under analysis. The reason is probably that we lack the complete dataset and, therefore, the incapacity to do a panel cross-section-time-series data analysis. The lack of effect of parties' electoral performance is, nevertheless, striking. We believe that we need a more subtle measure of electoral gains and losses. Parties that behave strategically pay close attention to where their vote gains come from and where their vote losses go to in order to define their electoral strategies. Therefore, we need to measure not just vote gains and losses but movements of votes between parties. This will be the task of future research efforts.

2.8 References

- Adams, J., Clark, M., Ezrow, L. and Glasgow, G. (2006), 'Are niche parties fundamentally different from mainstream parties? The causes and electoral consequences of western European parties' policy shifts, 1976-1998', *American Journal of Political Science* 50(3): 513–529.
- Alonso, S. (2012), *Challenging the State: Devolution and the Challenge of Partisan Credibility*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Alonso, S. and Gómez, B. (2011), 'Partidos nacionales en elecciones regional: ¿Coherencia territorial o programas a la carta?', *Revista de Estudios Políticos* 152: 183–209.
- Alonso, S., Cabeza, L. and Gómez, B. (2013), 'Measuring centre-periphery preferences: The Regional Manifestos Project', *Regional and Federal Studies* 23(2): 189–211.
- Basile, L. (2012), 'Party Competition on the Issue of Decentralisation. Sharp Conflict or Shared Consensus? Empirical Evidences from the Italian Case (1994–2008)', paper presented at the PSA Territorial Politics Specialist Group Biennial Conference, 13-14 September, Brussels.
- Basile, L. (2015), 'A dwarf among giants? Party competition between ethno-regionalist and state-wide parties on the territorial dimension: The case of Italy (1963–2013)'. *Party Politics* 21(6): 887–899.
- Benoit, K. and Däubler, T. (2014), 'Putting Text in Context: How to Estimate Better Left-Right Positions by Scaling Party Manifesto Data using Item Response Theory', paper presented at the Mapping Policy Preferences from Texts Conference, May 15–16, Berlin.
- Budge, I. (2013) 'The standard right-left scale', MARPOR. Available at: https://manifestoproject.wzb.eu/down/papers/budge_right-left-scale.pdf.
- Budge, I. and Farlie, D. (1983), 'Party competition: Selective emphasis or direct confrontation? An alternative view with data', in: Daalder, H. and Mair, P. (eds) *Western European Party Systems*, London: Sage, pp. 267–271.
- De Winter, L. and Türsan, H. (1998), *Regionalist Parties in Western Europe*. London: Routledge.
- Downs, A. (1957), *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Elias, A. (2009), 'From protest to power: Mapping the ideological evolution of Plaid Cymru and the Bloque Nacionalista Galego', *Regional and Federal Studies* 19(4–5): 533–557.

- Elias A, Szöcsik, E. and Zuber, C.I. (2015), 'Position, selective emphasis and framing: How parties deal with a second dimension in competition', *Party Politics* 21(6): 839–850.
- Green-Pedersen, C. and Mortensen, P.B. (2010), 'Who sets the agenda and who responds to it in the Danish parliament? A new model of issue competition and agenda-setting', *European Journal of Political Research* 49: 257–281.
- Green-Pedersen, C. and Mortensen, P.B. (2015), 'Avoidance and engagement: Issue competition in multiparty systems', *Political Studies* 63(4): 747–764.
- Hough, D. and Jeffery, C. (2006), *Devolution and Electoral Politics*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Kim, H. and Fording, R.C. (2002), 'Government partisanship in western democracies, 1945–1998', *European Journal of Political Research* 41(2): 187–206.
- Laver, M. and Budge, I. (1992), *Party Policy and Government Coalitions*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lo, J., Proksch, S.O. and Slapin, J.B. (2016), 'Ideological clarity in multiparty competition: A new measure and test using election manifestos', *British Journal of Political Science* 46(3): 591–610.
- Lowe, W., Benoit, K., Mikhaylov, S. and Laver, M. (2011), 'Scaling policy preferences from coded political texts', *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 36: 123–155.
- Marks, G., Hooghe, L., Nelson, M. and Edwards, E. (2006), 'Party competition and European integration in the east and west. Different structure same causality', *Comparative Political Studies* 39(2): 155–175.
- Masseti, E. (2009), 'Explaining regionalist party positioning in a multi-dimensional ideological space: A framework for analysis', *Regional and Federal Studies* 19(4–5): 501–531.
- Masseti, E. and Schakel, A.H. (2014), 'From 'Socio-Economic Class' to 'Socio-Economic Region': How Regionalist Parties Link Their Ideological Positions across the Centre-Periphery and the Left-Right Dimensions', paper presented at the EPOP Conference, September 12–14, Edinburgh.
- Meguid, B. (2008), *Party Competition between Unequals*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rovny, J. (2013), 'Where do radical right parties stand? Position blurring in multidimensional competition', *European Political Science Review* 5(1): 1–26.
- Stokes, D. (1963), 'Spatial models of party competition', *American Political Science Review* 57(2): 368–377.

Swenden, W. and Maddens, B. (2009), *Territorial Party Politics in Western Europe*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Zuber, C.I. (2012), 'Ethnic party competition beyond the segmented market', *Nationalities Papers* 40(6): 927–944.

2.9 Annex

The RMP Categories of the Territorial and the Economic Dimensions

Territorial Dimension (Based on Alonso *et al.*, 2013):

	RMP Coding Number	Definition
Centre	C32_YYY(Y)	All policy preference categories that come with a 32 code (i.e. more competencies for the central state)
	C21_YYY(Y)	All policy preference categories that come with a 21 code (i.e. fewer compet. for the peripheral territory)
	C30_(601, 6015, 6016, 608)	Promotion of [state] nation-building policies
	C20_602	Statements against peripheral nationalism or regionalism.
	C20_302 + C30_302	General statements against decentralization. In favour of (re-)centralisation at the state level.
Periphery	C22_YYY(Y)	All policy preference categories that come with a 22 code (i.e. more compet. for the peripheral territory)
	C31_YYY(Y)	All policy preference categories that come with a 31 code (i.e. fewer competencies for the central state)
	C20_(601, 6015, 6016, 608)	Promotion of [regional] nation-building policies
	C30_602	Statements against state nationalism or against the existing nation-state.
	C20_(301, 3013, 3014) + C30_301	General statements in favour of decentralisation at the regional level.

Economic Dimension (Based on Laver and Budge, 1992):

	RMP Coding Number	Definition
Left	CXX_403	Market regulation (any level of government)
	CXX_404	Economic planning (any level of government)
	CXX_406	Protectionism: positive (any level of government)
	CXX_412	Controlled economy (any level of government)
	CXX_413	Nationalization (any level of government)
Right	CXX_401	Free enterprise (any level of government)
	CXX_402	Incentives (any level of government)
	CXX_407	Protectionism: negative (any level of government)
	CXX_414	Economic orthodoxy (any level of government)

Further definitions of each code can be found in the RMP Codebook:

<http://www.regionalmanifestosproject.com/>

Cases in the Dataset:

Country	Region	N	1980-1983			1988-1993			1998-2001			2003-2006			2007-2010			2011-2012		
			PP (AP)	PSOE	Regionalist	PP	PSOE	Regionalist	PP	PSOE	Regionalist	PP	PSOE	Regionalist	PP	PSOE	Regionalist	PP	PSOE	Regionalist
E s	AN	4													X	X		X	X	
	AR	5										X			X			X	X	X
	AS	8		X		X									X	X		2	2	
	IB	4													X			X	X	X
	PV	14			X		X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	2
	CN	6													X	X	X	X	X	X
	CB	12	X				X	X	X	X	X				X	X	X	X	X	X
	CM	9	X	X		X	X		X	X					X	X			X	
	CL	7		X			X			X					X	X		X	X	
	CT	13			2			X			X	X			X	X	X	X	X	3
	EX	8	X	X			X			X					X	X		X	X	
	GA	10	X			X			X						X	X	X	X	X	2
	RI	4														X		X	X	X
	MD	6	X	X											X	X		X	X	
	MC	5				X									X	X		X	X	
	NA	5													X	X		X	X	X
	VC	6	X			X									X	X		X	X	
																		CON	LAB	Reg.
G B	SCT	3																X	X	X
	WLS	3																X	X	X

Asturias held regional elections in 2011 and in 2012. Until 2007, Navarrese People's Union (UPN) acted as the regional branch of the PP in Navarra, in 2011 they run regional elections separately.

Abbreviations: ES Spain, AN Andalusia, AR Aragon, AS Asturias, IB Balearic Islands, CN Canary Islands, CT Catalonia, CB Cantabria, CL Castile and Leon, CM Castile-La Mancha, EX Extremadura, GA Galicia, LR La Rioja, MD Community of Madrid, MC Community of Murcia, NC Community of Navarra, PV Basque Country, VC Valencian Community, GB Great Britain, SCT Scotland, WLS Wales.

Political Parties in the Dataset:

State-wide parties (regional branches)

Spain:	- People's Party; People's Alliance (PP;AP) - Spanish Socialist Worker's Party (PSOE)
Great Britain:	- Conservative Party (CON) - Labour Party (LAB)

Regionalist parties

Spain:	AR:	- Aragonese Party (PAR)
	IB:	- Socialist Party of Majorca-Iniciativa-Verds-ENTESA (PSM-IV-ExM)
	CB:	- Regionalist Party of Cantabria (PRC)
	CN:	- Canarian Coalition (CC)
	CT:	- Convergence and Union (CiU) - Republican Left of Catalonia (ERC) - Popular Unity Candidates (CUP)
	PV:	- Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) - Basque Country Unite (EHB)
	GA:	- Galician Nationalist Bloc (BNG) - Galician Alternative of the Left (AGE)
	RI:	- Riojan Party (PR)
	NC:	- Navarrese People's Union (UPN)
Great Britain:	SCT:	- Scottish National Party (SNP)
	WLS:	- Plaid Cymru (PC)

Chapter 3

How National Parties Nationalize Regional Elections: The Case of Spain¹⁷

(with Sonia Alonso and Braulio Gómez)

Abstract

This article demonstrates that regional branches of national parties do not limit regional election campaigns to regional issues. On the contrary, they nationalize regional elections (i.e., emphasize national-level issues in regional campaigns) as an electoral strategy to win votes. The empirical evidence comes from the quantitative content analysis of regional-level manifestos of the two main national parties in Spain, PP, and PSOE, between 1998 and 2015. The percentage of references to the national government is taken as an indicator of nationalization. We find that parties nationalize regional elections under two situations: when the national co-partisans are in office enjoying high levels of popularity or when the national co-partisans are in opposition and the nationally governing party is unpopular. These findings contribute to a better understanding of the role of national parties in subordinating the regional arena to the national one in federal and decentralized states.

¹⁷ This article is published in *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* (2017), 47(1): 77-98.

3.1 Introduction

Multi-level governance creates a perfect breeding ground for the subordination of sub-national – and supra-national – levels to the national political arena (Gschwend, 2008). In a complex institutional setting where the competences for major public policies are split between different levels of government, the ability of citizens to correctly attribute political responsibilities can be undermined (Anderson, 2006; León, 2012). Many studies in several European countries as well as in the United States, Canada, or Argentina show that citizens often take their cues from national government performance and from national party behavior to vote in regional elections (Gélineau and Remmer, 2006; Hough and Jeffery, 2006; Jeffery and Hough, 2009; Kedar, 2006; Lago-Peñas and Lago-Peñas, 2012; Rogers, 2013; Schleicher, 2016). If the behavior of voters in regional elections is determined by national factors, dual accountability, allegedly the primary source of federalism's beneficial effects, does not work as expected (Rodden and Wibbels, 2011). In such a situation, citizens decide whether to vote and for whom in regional elections on the basis of national issues instead of holding regional representatives accountable for regional policy outcomes. The subordination of sub-national – and supra-national – electoral arenas to the national one has received different names in the literature: electoral contamination, coattails, national electoral externalities, spill-over effects, nationalization. Most scholars analysing this phenomenon rely on either aggregate data of election results or, to a lesser extent, individual survey data (i.e., voters' electoral behavior). The ability of political parties to wilfully subordinate one electoral arena to another has been mostly overlooked.

Previous research based on party behavior suggests that issue salience in regional and national campaigns depends on the delimitation of government competences: parties address national policies in national elections while regional elections are mainly dominated by issues of regional competence (Pogorelis *et al.*, 2005). However, this article shows how national parties strategically emphasize and deemphasize national-level responsibilities during regional election campaigns in order to win votes. Although secondary, the presence of national issues in regional

campaigns varies between elections and across time within the same region, that is, even when the division of competences among the different levels of government remains stable. This article argues that nationalizing (or not nationalizing) regional elections is a strategic decision by parties that seek to obtain electoral gains by increasing or decreasing the degree of ‘second-orderness’ of regional elections. National parties are presumably aware of the role played by the evaluation of national politics in their success or failure in regional elections and design the electoral strategies accordingly (Stecker, 2015). To nationalize a regional campaign means here to frame the regional level of government as a second-order arena, encouraging voters to think about parties’ performance at the national level when casting their votes in regional elections. The extent to which the strategy of nationalization is used depends on the incentives of the parties to transform regional elections into a plebiscite about the performance of, and satisfaction with, the national government.

In order to test our argument, we use data from the content analysis of regional manifestos of the two main Spanish national parties, the *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (PSOE) and the *Partido Popular* (PP), between 1998 and 2015. By focusing on a single case like Spain, a large multi-level state with seventeen regions, this article aims to contribute to current debates within a comparative literature that has generally lacked a systematic account of the mechanisms that explain the linkage between regional and national arenas in decentralized and federal states beyond voters’ capacity to distinguish competences across levels of government.

3.2 Theoretical Argument and Hypotheses

The concept of nationalization has been developed in two different ways in political science, horizontal and vertical. The horizontal aspect of nationalization, which measures the nationalization of parties and party systems (Caramani, 2004; Chhibber and Kollman, 1998; Cox, 1997), has been much more widely researched than the vertical one. According to some scholars, nationalization describes the degree of homogeneity of parties’ vote shares across electoral districts in a

national election. There is a nationalized party system when the distribution of the vote is uniform across electoral districts. Different measures of party systems' nationalization have been proposed (for an overview see Bochslers, 2010). None of these indicators, however, are useful to analyse party competition in multi-level settings, whether conceptually or empirically.

The vertical view of nationalization, which focuses precisely on multi-level party competition, has been developed only recently. This approach understands nationalization as the extent to which national factors influence the results of regional elections (Rodden and Wibbels, 2011). A common way to measure nationalization of regional elections from this perspective is to calculate dissimilarity indexes between electoral results at the national and regional levels (Schakel, 2013a). A party system is nationalized when regional electoral outcomes are similar to national ones.

One of the most prominent theories linked to the nationalization of regional elections is the second-order election model. Higher levels of nationalization would indicate that regional elections are considered by voters and parties as a second-order arena, secondary in relevance to the national electoral arena. Second-order elections are elections in which there is less at stake compared to first-order elections. For this reason, they are characterized by lower voter turnout, electoral losses by the regional co-partisans of the national incumbent and electoral gains by smaller parties as a result of a larger incidence of protest or expressive votes (Marsh, 1998; Reif and Schmitt, 1980). According to previous research, the degree of subordination of regional elections to the national arena is determined by factors such as the level of self-government enjoyed by the region, the strength of the centre-periphery cleavage, or the election timing with respect to the national election cycle (Dandoy and Schakel, 2013; Hough and Jeffery, 2006; Jeffery and Hough, 2009; León, 2014; Kedar, 2006; Lago-Peñas and Lago-Peñas, 2012; Rodden and Wibbels, 2011; Schakel, 2013b).

Existing research on nationalization of regional elections privileges voting behavior over party strategy. The reason lies in the fact that vertical nationalization is generally seen as the result of particular institutional designs

that encourage certain types of voting behavior. However, several authors have readily admitted the need to re-focus our analyses in order to understand the role of parties' electoral strategies in the subordination of regional elections to the national arena (Gschwend, 2008; Rodden and Wibbels, 2011). We need to analyze the nationalization of regional elections from the point of view of parties' strategies. After all, how voters decide their vote depends, among other things, on the way parties influence voters' decisions through strategies of priming and framing during the electoral campaign (Petrocik, 1996). Much of the allocation of responsibility in multi-level states is based on strategies of credit-claiming and blame-avoidance by parties in government and in opposition (Volden, 2005).

National parties want to maximize votes in regional elections as much as in national elections. When preparing their campaigns national parties have to decide which issues and issue dimensions have to be emphasized in each electoral arena. The nationalization of regional elections is a readily available, and easy to implement, strategy to reap electoral benefits in the region from decisions taken at the center. To nationalize a regional campaign means to frame the regional arena as a second-order election, encouraging voters to think about parties' performance at the national level when casting their votes in the regional election. One way to nationalize a regional campaign is to emphasize policy issues that address national level responsibilities, leaving aside regional concerns or emphasizing them to a lesser degree. Another way is to make very salient a critical evaluation of the competitor's performance at the national level, or to highlight the good results of the national co-partisans. Yet another way is to increase the presence and participation of national leaders in regional campaign events. Notice that, thus defined, nationalization is less about policy positions than it is about issue salience. The second-order hypothesis has nothing to say about the positions of national parties in regional elections; according to this theory, the policy issues discussed during the regional campaigns address topics and interests that are quite parochial and, by implication, the positions taken by national parties in these second-order elections will vary to the extent that regional circumstances and contexts vary across territories. What matters is the salience given to national issues and national government performance in the regional electoral campaigns.

Regional branches of the national incumbent party have incentives to nationalize regional elections when the economy is going well or when, despite an unimpressive economic performance, the national government is, for whatever reason (domestic or foreign policy successes unrelated to the economy), popular with the voters. When they are unpopular or under-performing at the national level, they will limit the regional campaign to regional issues so that their unpopularity or bad performance will not adversely affect their electoral prospects at the regional level.

Table 1

Expected behaviour of national parties in regional elections

	Economic growth and popular national incumbent	Economic crisis and unpopular national incumbent
Party in office (national)	↑ Nationalization	↓ Nationalization
Party in opposition (national)	↓ Nationalization	↑ Nationalization

Concerning the regional branches of the national opposition party, the reverse applies. They have incentives to nationalize regional elections when the national incumbent is under-performing or unpopular or when the economy is going badly. Thus, the regional branches of the national opposition transform the regional campaign into a plebiscite on the national incumbent competitor. When the national incumbent is popular, the regional branches of the national opposition have no incentive to nationalize the regional campaigns. The expected strategies of parties in regional elections are illustrated in table 1.

Our argument is condensed in the following hypothesis:

H1.1: An increase in the national government's popularity, a good national economic performance or a combination of both is associated with an increase in the use of the strategy of nationalization of regional elections by the party in office at the national level.

H1.2: An increase in the national government's popularity, a good national economic performance or a combination of both is associated with a decrease in the use of the strategy of nationalization of regional elections by the party in the opposition at the national level.

We assume that, irrespective of the parties' level of internal centralization and regardless of the divergence in policy positions across regional branches, national parties have incentives to act in a coordinated way when designing their campaign strategies in regional elections. The decision to use the strategy of nationalization in a regional election could be initiated by the national or by the regional organizations but we assume that is shared by the party as a whole.

There are some factors that can affect the hypothesized disposition of national parties to implement the strategy of nationalization of regional elections. First, in countries in which there is a salient territorial dimension of party competition (Elias, Szöcsik and Zuber, 2015), parties may use the nationalization of a regional campaign to signal their preference for centralization, or recentralization, of government powers, irrespective of their incumbency status and the performance of the national government. The party label would be the mechanism that explains this behavior, as it sets limits on what the parties can do if they want to preserve their reputation. We expect that national parties that support decentralization will nationalize regional elections to a lesser extent than more pro-centralist or unionist parties, which will use the strategy of nationalization of regional elections more often.

Second, national parties can have fewer incentives to use the strategy of nationalization in those regions in which the level of self-government is higher or where there is a differentiated cultural, historical or linguistic identity among the population. In these regions, the electoral fate of national parties in regional elections is less dependent on the performance of the party at the national level (Schakel and Jeffery, 2013). The adaptation of political messages and policy programs to the regional particularities of these territories leads to a more differentiated regional agenda with respect to the national one. If wider sub-national powers are accompanied by the presence of strong regionalist parties that

focus the debate on regional issues, the incentives for the regional branches of national parties to follow independent and regionally based electoral strategies are expected to be even higher.

Finally, we expect that parties will use the strategy of nationalization more often when regional elections are held on the same date as national elections. Previous research has shown that vertical simultaneity reduces the autonomy of regional branches of national parties (Deschouwer, 2006) and increases the influence of the national arena in regional electoral results (Schakel and Dandoy, 2014). In addition, concurrence of regional and national elections may facilitate the development of coordinated election campaigns, giving room to a more natural presence of national issues and actors in the regional campaign.

3.3 Cases and Data: Nationalizing Regional Elections in Spain

3.3.1 Case Selection

To test our hypotheses, we analyze the strategies of the two main national parties, the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) and the People's Party (PP), in a series of regional elections held in Spain between October 1998 and May 2015. The Spanish case is a quasi-experimental setting, in the sense that we have a period of economic growth and high levels of government popularity immediately followed by a deep economic recession and a negative evaluation of the government's performance, with national and regional elections taking place in-between. Four waves of regional elections are selected for each region.¹⁸ This allows us to compare the behavior of the regional branches of national parties under opposite political and economic conditions and different circumstances of incumbency at the national level (table 2). Regional elections in Spain are held simultaneously in thirteen out of the seventeen regions that make up the country, while the remaining four regions (Andalusia, Catalonia, the Basque Country, and Galicia) have their own electoral calendar.

¹⁸ Since no regional elections took place during the period 2009–2011 in Andalusia, only three waves of regional elections are included for this region.

Table 2

Elections included in the analysis and contextual information

Period	Years	Party in office (national)	Average national government evaluation (% good - % bad)	Average annual GDP growth (%)	Regional elections included in the analysis
Economic growth and positive national government evaluation	1998-01	PP (<i>Partido Popular</i>)	+24	4.5	1998 (25 Oct.): PV 1999 (13 Jun.): AR, AS, IB, CN, CB, CL, CM, EX, LR, MD, MC, NC, VC 1999 (17 Oct.): CT 2000 (12 Mar.): AN 2001 (21 Oct.): GA
	2005-08	PSOE (<i>Partido Socialista Obrero Español</i>)	+8	3.2	2005 (17 Apr.): PV 2005 (19 Jun.): GA 2006 (1 Nov.): CT 2007 (27 May): AR, AS, IB, CN, CB, CL, CM, EX, LR, MD, MC, NC, VC 2008 (9 Mar.): AN
Economic crisis and negative national government evaluation	2009-11	PSOE (<i>Partido Socialista Obrero Español</i>)	-41	-1.5	2009 (1 Mar.): GA, PV 2010 (28 Nov.): CT 2011 (22 May): AR, AS, IB, CN, CB, CL, CM, EX, LR, MD, MC, NC, VC
	2012-15	PP (<i>Partido Popular</i>)	-54	0.07	2012 (25 Mar.): AN, AS 2012 (21 Oct.): GA, PV 2012 (25 Nov.): CT 2015 (24 May): AR, IB, CN, CB, CL, CM, EX, LR, MD, MC, NC, VC

Abbreviations: AN Andalusia, AR Aragon, AS Asturias, IB Balearic Islands, CN Canary Islands, CT Catalonia, CB Cantabria, CL Castile and Leon, CM Castile-La Mancha, EX Extremadura, GA Galicia, LR La Rioja, MD Community of Madrid, MC Community of Murcia, NC Community of Navarra, PV Basque Country, VC Valencian Community

Given that one of our main goals is to test the effect of national incumbency, we focus on the two Spanish national parties that have been in office. For more than

30 years, PSOE and PP have dominated the national political arena in Spain and successive national governments have been formed by these two parties since 1982. PSOE ruled until 1996, and between 2004 and 2011, whereas PP formed the Spanish government from 1996 to 2004, and, again, since 2011. In average, during the whole period analyzed here, their combined vote share in regional elections has always been above 50 percent. We end up with a total of 134 observations.

3.3.2 Opposite Electoral Contexts and Preliminary Qualitative Evidence

The different waves of regional elections in Spain covered by this article were held under very different circumstances. Regional elections taking place between 1998 and 2001 were held under the incumbency of the PP at the national level. In 1996, the PP won the Spanish elections for the first time and took office after fourteen consecutive years of PSOE-led national governments. During the first legislature of the conservative government, the evolution of the main macroeconomic indicators was positive, the high unemployment rate of the previous period was falling and Spain met the convergence criteria for joining the European monetary union and adopting the Euro. This good economic performance was reflected in the famous slogan “Spain is going well” (*España va bien*) coined by Prime Minister José María Aznar, whose popularity was on the rise, and repeated once and again during the regional election campaigns.

Regional elections held between 2005 and the beginning of 2008 also took place during an exceptional period for the Spanish economy. The unemployment rate was the lowest in the democratic era (7.9 percent), but this time the national incumbent party was the PSOE. The presence of Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero in the different events of the regional campaigns was constant and he tried to improve the electoral prospects of its regional co-partisans by talking about the good economic results of the national government, which was enjoying high levels of popularity. At the presentation of the framework program for the 2007 local and regional elections, he declared: ‘what is at stake in the next

[local and regional] elections is the implementation of legislation promoted and designed by this [national] Government... We all know that our economy is growing at a rate above the EU average, above that of Japan, but what matters is that such prosperity reaches everyone...' (*Diario Hoy*, 15 April 2007).

In the period 2009–2011, the situation was totally reversed. The PSOE, re-elected to office in 2008, was presiding over an economy in recession and the popularity of the government had vanished. The unemployment rate was above 20 percent; the GDP growth rate had dropped from 3.8 percent in 2007 to –1.0 percent in 2011. In this context, the PP designed a campaign aimed at turning the regional elections into a plebiscite over the national government's performance, making constant references to José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero. The PSOE tried to avoid it by focusing on regional-level issues. We find confirmation of these strategies in the explanation that the national organization of the PSOE gave to justify the suspension of its traditional pre-campaign opening meeting in Vista Alegre, Madrid: 'Vista Alegre implies an enormous effort that we prefer to redirect to the territorial events and this decision fits in our electoral strategy that is to focus on the local and regional elections, against the strategy of the PP to transform the 22 of May in a first round of the general election'' (*Europa Press*, 9 March 2011).

After the defeat of the PSOE in the Spanish general election of 2011, regional elections were held during the period 2012–2015 under the national incumbency of the PP and the ongoing economic and financial crisis.

3.3.3 A Quantitative Indicator of the Strategy of Nationalization Based on Election Manifestos

All extant indicators used to measure the level of nationalization of regional elections are based on electoral results or, to a lesser extent, on individual survey data and, therefore, on voters' electoral behavior. The most common way to operationalize this concept is to quantify parties' vote gains and losses between national and regional elections. Some scholars propose a very simple model where the dependent variable is the parties' vote share in regional elections and the independent variable is the parties' vote share in national elections (Amat, Jurado

and León, 2012; León, 2014). Most studies use synthetic measures of congruence of the vote, such as dissimilarity indexes between the results of regional and national elections (Schakel, 2013b; Dandoy and Schakel, 2013). The idea behind this approach is the following: regional elections are less influenced by national factors the more their results deviate from national election results. In any case, parties' strategies remain outside the scope of analysis.

To our knowledge, the only exceptions to this are Pogorelis *et al.* (2005), who used data from regional and national election manifestos in UK to analyze whether issue saliency depends or not on the actual division of powers between levels of government, and Stecker (2015), who used a variety of regional documents (manifestos, coalition agreements, and legislative initiatives) to study how the regional branches of national parties in Germany address national-level policies to signal their preferences about first-order issues over which they have little influence.

The empirical evidence of this article comes from the Regional Manifestos Project (RMP) dataset (Gómez, Alonso and Cabeza, 2009). The RMP has collected, coded, and analyzed regional election manifestos, adapting the classification scheme of the Manifesto Project (which only covers national election programs) to multi-level states (i.e., decentralized states with different tiers of government). The methodology is the same in both projects: the quantitative content analysis of parties' manifestos.¹⁹ The text is divided into quasi-sentences which are coded into one policy category according to a classification scheme that covers a wide range of issues. Once all the text has been coded, the number of quasi-sentences that are dedicated to each policy category is computed and expressed as a percentage over the total number of quasi-sentences in the manifesto (saliency score). The main advantage of the RMP is that an additional code is added to each quasi-sentence in order to distinguish the level of government that it addresses (local, regional, national, European, or international) and the preferred degree of authority for that level (more/less competences for the level of government

¹⁹ For further information about the RMP's methodology see Alonso, Gómez, and Cabeza (2013). The data file is available from www.regionalmanifestosproject.com.

mentioned or status quo). The two codes are separated by a hyphen, so they can be analyzed together or separately.²⁰

In order to measure the strategy of nationalization of regional elections, we use the saliency score of code 30 (followed by any one of the 76 policy issue codes). This code captures the percentage of, quasi-sentences that are devoted to talk about the national level of government – no matter the specific policy issue – in regional manifestos. In other words, it means that the policy issue addressed by the quasi-sentence is framed in national terms. Whether the mentions to the national level are negative (to be expected when the co-partisans are in opposition at the national level), positive (to be expected when the co-partisans are in office at the national level) or neutral is irrelevant here. As stated in our hypothesis, a party has an incentive to nationalize regional elections either in order to benefit from the popularity of the co-partisans in office at the national level or to damage the electoral prospects of the regional branches of the national incumbent party. What matters is that the level of government addressed is the national one, which in the RMP's coding scheme is captured by code 30. In order to avoid potential bias in our indicator due to punctual increases in the salience of the territorial debate (for example, in the 2010 and 2012 Catalan elections), the small number of quasi-sentences in which the party claims explicitly for recentralization (code 31) or for decentralization (code 32) are excluded. This means that the quasi-sentences included in this indicator are simply connecting particular policy preferences to the national level of government, accepting the territorial status quo (i.e. the existing distribution of competences between the levels of government). Thus, this indicator does not necessarily reflect the position of the party along the territorial centre-periphery dimension.

Although few people read them, election manifestos offer a unique view of political parties' intentions and the image they choose to project to the voters. A great deal of literature has stressed the advantages of using election manifestos as the main source to analyze the preferences of political parties (Alonso, Gómez and

²⁰ When election manifestos are not available, we use as a proxy the speeches in the presidential investiture debate (debate de investidura), in which the candidates for the regional presidency present their political programmes.

Volgens, 2012). Even if no voter takes electoral manifestos into account when deciding which party to vote for, they are a good proxy of the contents of the electoral campaigns. Increasing the amount of references to the national level of government in regional manifestos is, therefore, an indirect indicator of a party's electoral strategy of nationalization.

This indicator has a clear advantage compared to the few previous measurements of the disposition of parties to address national level policies in regional elections using manifestos. Scholars tend to divide *a priori*, on a case-by-case basis, the different policy domains (education, economic development, agriculture, etc.) into either regional or national-level responsibilities in order to compare the relative saliency of the two levels (see, for example, Pogorelis *et al.*, 2005, who propose a list of issues to reflect the division of competences between the central and regional governments in UK). The problem with this approach is that it is hard to find policies provided and implemented exclusively by one level of government in decentralized states. Usually, there are shared powers between national and regional governments or, at least, some degree of overlapping responsibilities even if the competences are clearly distributed. For instance, in the Spanish case education is a regional-level issue but there is still a national Ministry of Education that sets general educational policy. Our indicator has the advantage that it is not based on the existing distribution of policy competences across the levels of government but on parties' direct references to the national level of government in regional manifestos.

3.4 Results

In this section, we shall first present a descriptive analysis of how the use of the strategy of nationalization by the regional branches of national parties varies according to national incumbency and national government's performance. We then move on to a regression analysis.

For the empirical analysis, the data are first split into two periods: from 1998 to 2008, the years of economic growth and positive evaluations of the national government's performance, and from 2009 to 2015, the years of the Great

Recession in Spain and low levels of the national government's popularity. In the first period the annual GDP growth rate was positive. The net difference between the number of citizens that evaluated as good or very good the performance of the national government and those who said that it was bad or very bad was also positive; citizens were on the whole satisfied with national government's performance. In the second period, the GDP growth rate was negative or close to 0 and the net citizens' satisfaction with government's performance was negative (table 2). Then, we divide these two periods into two sub-samples: manifestos written while the national co-partisans are in office and in opposition.

Table 3

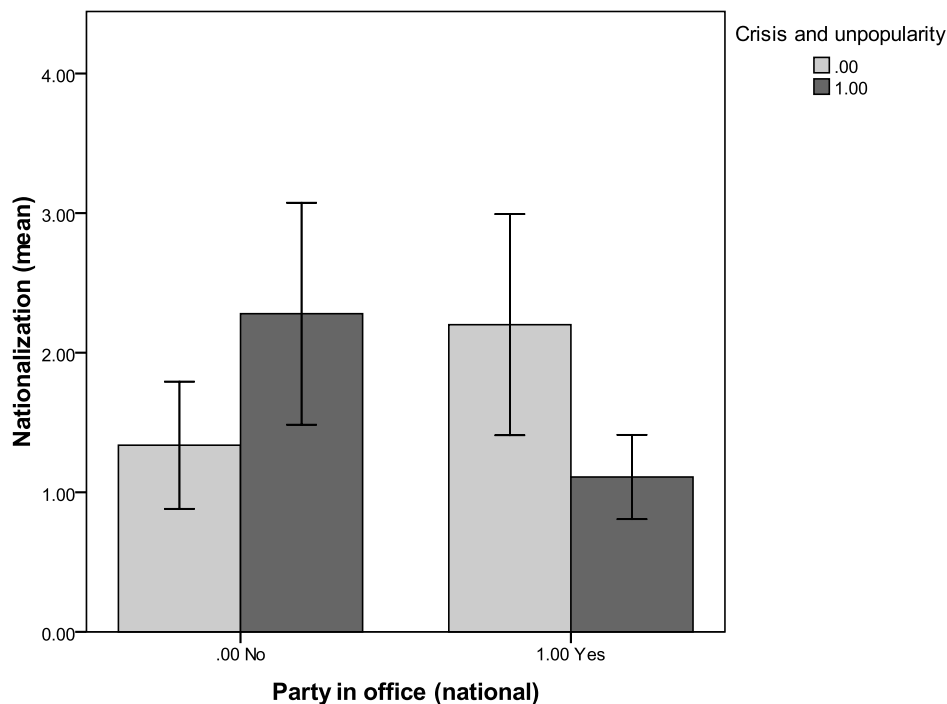
Mean nationalization of regional elections by region

REGION	Party in office (national)			Party in opposition (national)		
	Economic growth and positive national government evaluation	Economic crisis and negative national government evaluation	Diff.	Economic growth and positive national government evaluation	Economic crisis and negative national government evaluation	Diff.
Andalusia	3,52	2.39	-1.13	2.91	2.20	-0.71
Aragon	0,40	1.97	1.58	0.26	3.80	3.54
Asturias	6,10	1.65	-4.45	0.58	2.38	1.80
Balearic Islands	0,59	1.11	0.52	0.31	1.31	1.00
Canary Islands	3,45	0.18	-3.27	0.95	1.99	1.04
Cantabria	2,47	0.97	-1.51	0.49	2.28	1.79
Castile and Leon	0,61	1.85	1.24	2.24	2.94	0.69
C.-La Mancha	1,70	0.42	-1.29	1.94	7.15	5.21
Catalonia	2,53	1.41	-1.13	2.97	2.65	-0.31
Extremadura	3,29	0.36	-2.94	1.36	0.9	-0.47
Galicia	1,31	0.82	-0.49	1.44	0.71	-0.73
La Rioja	2,18	2.6	0.42	1.04	2.06	1.02
Madrid	1,87	1.06	-0.81	1.96	1.53	-0.42
Murcia	0,89	0.49	-0.4	0.83	4.4	3.58
Navarra	3,73	0.67	-3.06	1.45	0.36	-1.09
Basque Country	1,46	0.97	-0.48	0.93	0.90	-0.03
Valencia	1,30	0.59	-0.72	1.07	1.15	0.08

Table 3 shows the mean percentage of sentences addressing the national level of government in regional manifestos under opposite circumstances disaggregated by region. Let us remember that the higher the number of direct mentions to the national level of government in a regional manifesto, the more the party is trying to frame the regional election in national, not regional, terms. According to our hypothesis, an economic crisis or the deterioration of national government's popularity will foster the use of the strategy of nationalization by the regional branches of the national opposition party. Therefore, in table 3, we expect positive values in the last column (this is the case in thirteen out of the seventeen Spanish regions or 76 percent of the time). In contrast, the effect will be the opposite for the regional branches of the national incumbent. Thus, negative values are expected in the fourth column of table 3 (this is confirmed in ten out of seventeen regions or 59 percent of the time).

Figure 1

Mean nationalization of regional elections



Error Bars: 95% CI

In figure 1, we plot the mean level of nationalization of regional elections. The data show that the references to the national level of government in regional manifestos increase under two circumstances: when the national co-partisans are in opposition during a period of economic crisis and low popularity of the national government, and when the national co-partisans are in office under a growing economy and enjoying high levels of popularity.

This goes in the direction established by our hypothesis. Regional branches of national opposition parties increase the saliency of the national level in their regional manifestos when the national economy is performing badly and the national government is unpopular in an attempt to damage the electoral prospects of the national incumbent's co-partisans in the regions, thereby nationalizing the regional campaigns. Regional branches of the national incumbent nationalize regional campaigns more often when the economy is going well and the national government is popular. In such a case, the emphasis on national-level issues in regional elections could help the regional branches to take credit for the good results of the party label.

The previous descriptive analysis seems to offer some confirmatory evidence for our hypothesis; regional branches of national political parties nationalize regional elections under certain circumstances related to the economic and political context. The next logical step is to repeat the analysis using a regression model in order to explore more in depth the explanatory power of our predictors.

The dependent variable is our indicator of nationalization, the percentage of quasi-sentences addressing the national level of government in regional manifestos. As independent variables we include national incumbency, a dummy variable that adopts the value 1 when the party is in office at the national level and 0 otherwise, and, for the first model, a dummy variable named crisis and unpopularity, which indicates if the election was held in a period of national economic recession and a negative net evaluation of the national government (value 1) or a period of national economic growth and a positive net evaluation of the national government performance (value 0). We interact these two terms to test our hypothesis that predicts a negative coefficient: the party would avoid

nationalization when it is in office at the national level presiding under an economic crisis and with low levels of popularity.

As control variables we include three dummies: party label, type of region, and vertical simultaneity. The first one, party label, adopts the value 1 when the party is the PP. We expect a positive coefficient. The regional branches of the PP would nationalize regional elections to a greater extent than those of the PSOE due to the different stances of these two parties regarding the territorial debate: the PP has traditionally defended the unity of Spain, while the PSOE has always been less reluctant to accommodate regionalist demands. The second one takes the value 1 for the historical nationalities (Catalonia, the Basque Country, and Galicia). These regions are characterized by the strong sense of historical and cultural identity of their inhabitants, by the presence of strong regionalist parties and by having their own electoral calendar. For these reasons, we can expect fewer references to the national level of government in the regional manifestos of these territories. The third variable is called vertical simultaneity and adopts the value 1 when regional and national elections are held on the same date. We expect a positive coefficient.

As an additional robustness check the analysis is replicated with two alternative and independent measurements of the economic situation and the national government popularity instead of the simple dichotomy ‘crisis and unpopularity’ versus ‘growth and popularity’. In Model 2, we replace the dummy independent variable by a continuous measure of economic performance that takes into account the disparities across the Spanish regions: the GDP growth rate by region, which ranges from –4.2 to 6.9 throughout the period analyzed. An overwhelming majority of the Spanish population attributes the responsibility for regional economic conditions to the national government. More than 75 percent says that the central government is the administrative level responsible for things going well or badly in the economy, against just 11 percent that points at the regional governments (CIS 2012, *Barómetro Autonómico III*). Therefore, a good regional economic performance will be celebrated as part of the national government’s good management and will encourage the nationalization strategy among the national incumbent co-partisans.

In Model 3, we use public opinion data about the national government's evaluation by region. The barometers of the *Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas* (CIS) include the following question on a quarterly basis: 'As a whole, how would you rate the performance of the PSOE/the PP (national) government: very good, good, so-so, bad, or very bad?' We have reversed the scale and computed the mean for each region in the closest month to the regional election. The variable ranging from 1 (very bad) to 5 (very good) has been mean-centered because, unlike the regional GDP growth rate, it does not contain a meaningful value of 0.

Table 4

OLS Regression models, robust standard error clustered by region

	<i>Model 0</i> Control variables only	<i>Model 1</i> Crisis and unpop. (dummy)	<i>Model 2</i> GDP growth by region	<i>Model 3</i> National government popularity by region
PP	0.683* (0.280)	0.779* (0.299)	0.553 ⁺ (0.269)	0.545 ⁺ (0.282)
Historical nationality	-0.219 (0.404)	-0.219 (0.409)	-0.279 (0.448)	-0.219 (0.409)
Vertical simultaneity	1.488*** (0.150)	1.495*** (0.214)	1.546*** (0.130)	1.485*** (0.289)
National incumbency	-	0.863* (0.402)	-0.774 (0.467)	-0.179 (0.342)
Crisis and unpopularity	-	1.090* (0.436)	-	-
National incumbency × Crisis and unpopularity	-	-2.151*** (0.528)	-	-
GDP growth	-	-	-0.192* (0.085)	-
National incumbency × GDP growth	-	-	0.292** (0.082)	-
National government popularity	-	-	-	-1.134** (0.389)
National incumbency × National government popularity	-	-	-	2.273*** (0.452)
Constant	1.386*** (0.192)	0.898*** (0.195)	1.942*** (0.375)	1.544*** (0.241)
N	134	134	134	134
adj. R-sq	0.0575	0.1466	0.1172	0.1583

*** p<0,001; **p<0,01; * p<0,05; ⁺ p<0,10 (Standard errors in parenthesis). DV: Nationalization of regional elections (% of quasi-sentences addressing the national level in regional manifestos).

These alternative measurements of the state of the economy and citizens' evaluation of national government's performance are highly correlated between them (Pearson r is 0.62 and the correlation is significant at the 0.01 level, two-tailed test). Both in Model 2 and Model 3, we expect a positive coefficient of the interaction of these variables with national incumbency: an increase in either economic growth (Model 2) or national government popularity (Model 3) would be associated with an increase in nationalization when the national co-partisans are in office.

In spite of the nested structure of the data, we use OLS-regression analysis due to the small number of cases in the dataset. In each region, we only have four waves of elections and two parties per wave. Nevertheless, all the models are computed with robust standard errors clustered by region. Results are shown in table 4.

To help interpret correctly the coefficients of the interaction terms we have calculated the marginal effects of the independent variables of each model (crisis and unpopularity, GDP growth, and government popularity, respectively) conditional on national incumbency, following Brambor, Clark, and Golder's (2006) suggestions. Results are reported in table 5. The effect of the variables measuring the economic or political performance on our indicator of nationalization is modified by incumbency at the national level.

Table 5
Estimated marginal effects conditional on national incumbency

	Crisis and unpopularity (Model 1)	GDP growth (Model 2)	National government popularity (Model 3)
National incumbency = No (0)	1.090* (0.436)	-0.192* (0.085)	-1.134** (0.389)
National incumbency = Yes (1)	-1.061* (0.416)	0.099 ⁺ (0.058)	1.140** (0.434)

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$; ⁺ $p < 0.10$ (Standard errors in parenthesis).

The influence of the interplay between national incumbency and the economic and political situation remains significant even if we use alternative measurements of the latter two. In Model 1, the sign of the interaction is negative, as we expected. To hold national office during a period of economic crisis and low popularity discourages parties from using the strategy of nationalization. Under this scenario, the regional branches choose to frame the regional campaign in regional terms. Additionally, the coefficient for crisis and unpopularity is significant. This is equivalent to the marginal effect of crisis and unpopularity for the national opposition and the sign is positive; i.e., the references to the national level of government increase. The regional branches of the national opposition frame the regional elections in national terms in order to undermine the incumbent's electoral prospects in the regions. In doing so, they encourage voters to think about (the negative) incumbent's performance at the national, not the regional, level when casting their votes in regional elections.

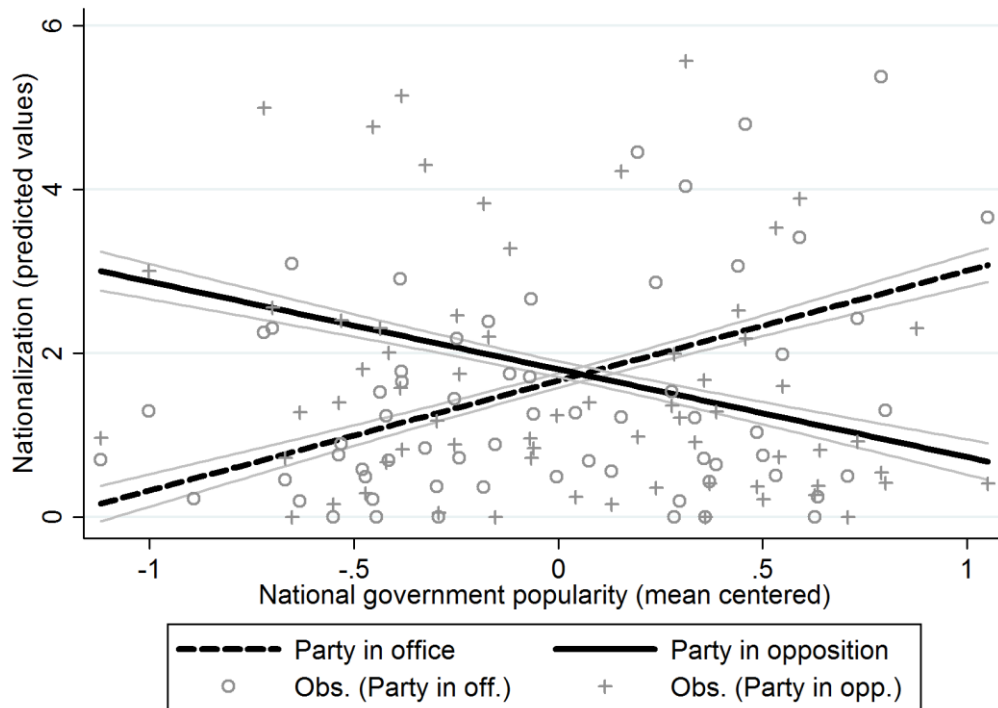
The results of Models 2 and 3 also corroborate our hypothesis. The coefficient of the interaction between national incumbency and GDP growth is statistically significant and positive (model 2). A growing regional economy is associated with higher levels of nationalization when the co-partisans are in office at the national level. As depicted in table 5, if the party is the national opposition, the increase of the GDP has the opposite effect: the regional branches decrease the references to the national government in their manifestos, devoting more space to regional-level issues.

The same effect is found when the independent variable introduced in the interaction is government popularity instead (Model 3). When the co-partisans are in office, an increase in the national government's popularity in the region is linked with an increase in nationalization. However, when the co-partisans are in the opposition, the references to the national level of government decrease as the latter becomes more popular. This is clearly illustrated by Figure 2, which shows the predicted values of our dependent variable by *national incumbency* and *national government popularity*, according to model 3. A very similar picture

emerges when we plot the values predicted by model 2 replacing national government popularity by regional GDP growth (not shown here).

Figure 2

Predicted values of nationalization by national government popularity and incumbency
(based on Model 3), with 95 percent C.I. in grey



Regarding the control variables, the coefficient of the dummy variable which indicates historical nationalities (Catalonia, Galicia, and the Basque Country=1) is not significant in any of the three models. In fact, it is not even significant in model 0, where there are only the control variables. Nevertheless, the sign of the coefficient goes in all the cases in the expected direction, being negative. In contrast, the coefficient of the variable indicating vertical simultaneity is significant in all the models. As expected, if regional elections are held on the same date as national elections, the use of the strategy of nationalization by parties increases. The results are not as clear for the variable PP (People's Party=1). Due to its major support for centralization, we expected the People's Party engaging in the strategy of nationalization of regional elections more often than the PSOE. Model 1, and also Model 0 with just the control variables, suggests that this is the

case. The references to the national level of government increase in the regional manifestos of the PP. Nevertheless, in Models 2 and 3, the coefficient of the variable PP, that keeps the positive sign, is only significant at the 0.10 level. In these last models, the explanatory power of the variable PP is partially compensated by the effect of our crucial variables that come to the fore. Party labels seem to be more adaptable to the context than initially expected. The reputational constraint has a weaker influence over campaign decisions than the electoral benefits expected from the strategy of nationalization.

Finally, although the model fit in all three regressions is not very good, R-square doubles when introducing in each model the key terms for our hypothesis (i.e., the main effects of incumbency and government/economic performance, and their crucial interaction) with respect to the model that only includes the control variables.

3.5 Conclusions

Our objective here was to demonstrate that national parties in decentralized states can emphasize and deemphasize their references to the national level of government in regional election campaigns and that they do so as an electoral strategy, one among many, to either gain votes or minimize electoral losses. We believe we have provided empirical evidence that moves in the direction of our theoretical argument, although given the scarcity of cases that we have analyzed we must be cautious in our conclusions.

We have used manifesto data to explain under what circumstances the regional branches of the main Spanish national parties are more likely to nationalize regional elections. In this sense, our findings show two mirror strategies at play. First, a national opposition party nationalizes regional elections during a period of economic crisis and low popularity of the national government as a way to damage the electoral prospects of its competitor by transforming regional elections into a plebiscite on the national incumbent's performance. Second, a national incumbent party nationalizes regional elections when the economy is

going well and the national government is popular in order to help its regional branches to take credit for the good results of the national government.

Ultimately, the strategy of nationalization is always present, as there is always an electoral benefit to be reaped from using it by either of the two main national competitors. When things are going well and the incumbent is popular, we will see the regional co-partisans of the incumbent party nationalizing the regional election; alternatively, when things are going badly and the incumbent is unpopular, it is the turn of the regional co-partisans of the national opposition party to nationalize the regional election. The question that remains is which of these two mirror strategies is more intense and, unfortunately, our results are not clear in this respect. We need more cases with which to compare the Spanish case before we can say more about this.

Our results have some interesting policy implications beyond the Spanish case. We have found a very strong institutional effect of the simultaneity of the electoral calendar and a weak effect of higher levels of self-government present in regions with a differentiated cultural, historical, or linguistic identity. In countries with a synchronic electoral calendar across levels of government, national parties will use the strategy of nationalization to a higher degree than in countries with diachronic electoral calendars. This means that a way of reducing the ‘second-orderness’ of regional elections is to de-synchronize the electoral calendar. Doing this will reduce the degree of subordination of regional politics to national events and circumstances. On the other hand, the level of self-government achieved seems to be no guarantee for the independence of the regional electoral arena; only if combined with an independent electoral calendar is the level of self-government a significant factor in reducing the ‘second-orderness’ of regional elections.

There is still much to be done. We have but started to understand how parties nationalize regional elections. Moreover, and more importantly, we need to understand what makes these strategies succeed or fail. Do parties’ strategies of nationalization of regional elections actually have an impact on voting behavior? At this point, all we can do is formulate the question.

3.6 References

- Alonso, S., Gómez, B. and Volkens, A. (2012), 'Análisis de contenido de textos políticos. Un enfoque cuantitativo', Cuadernos Metodológicos 47. Madrid: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS).
- Alonso, S., Gómez, B. and Cabeza, L. (2013), 'Measuring centre-periphery preferences: The regional manifestos project', *Regional and Federal Studies* 23 (2): 189–211.
- Amat, F., Jurado, I. and León, S. (2012), 'Electoral externalities in decentralized parliamentary democracies', paper presented at the XXII IPSA World Congress of Political Science, July 8–12, Madrid.
- Anderson, C. (2006), 'Economic voting and multilevel governance: A comparative individual-level analysis', *American Journal of Political Science* 50 (2): 449–463.
- Bochsler, D. (2010), 'How to measure party nationalisation', in: Bochsler, D. (ed.), *Territory and electoral rules in post-communist democracies*, Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 37–57.
- Brambor, T., Clark, W.R. and Golder, M. (2006), 'Understanding interaction models: Improving empirical analyses', *Political Analysis* 14: 63–82.
- Caramani, D. (2004), *The nationalization of politics. The formation of national electorates and party systems in Western Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chhibber, P., and Kollman, K. (1998), 'Party aggregation and the number of parties in India and the United States', *The American Political Science Review* 92 (2): 329–342.
- Cox, G.W. (1997), *Making votes count: Strategic coordination in the world's electoral systems*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dandoy, R. and Schakel, A.H. (eds.) (2013), *Regional and national elections in Western Europe. Territoriality of the vote in thirteen countries*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Deschouwer, K. (2006), 'Political parties as multi-level organizations', in: Katz, R.S. and Crotty, W.J. (eds.), *Handbook of party politics*, London: Sage, 291–300.
- Elias, A., Szöcsik, E. and Zuber, C.I. (2015), 'Position, selective emphasis and framing. How parties deal with a second dimension in competition', *Party Politics* 21 (6): 839–850.
- Gélineau, F. and Remmer, K.L. (2006), 'Political decentralization and electoral accountability: The Argentine Experience, 1983–2001', *British Journal of Political Science* 36 (1): 133–157.

- Gómez, B., Alonso, S. and Cabeza, L. (2009), Regional Manifestos Project [CSO2009-11241]. R&D&i National Plan, Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness, Government of Spain (Version 29.07.2016) [Data file]. Available from www.regionalmanifestosproject.com.
- Gschwend, T. (2008), 'Studying contamination effects in multi-level systems of governance: First thoughts about hypotheses and research design', in: Eijk, C. van der and Schmitt, H. (eds.), *The Multilevel Electoral System of the EU*, Mannheim: CONNEX, 229–240.
- Hough, D. and Jeffery, C. (ed.) (2006), *Devolution and electoral politics*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Jeffery, C. and Hough, D. (2009), 'Understanding post-devolution elections in Scotland and Wales in comparative perspective', *Party Politics* 15 (2): 219–240.
- Kedar, O. (2006), 'How voters work around institutions: Policy balancing in staggered elections', *Electoral Studies* 25: 509–527.
- Lago-Peñas, I., and Lago-Peñas, S. (2012), *Descentralización y control electoral de los gobiernos en España*, Barcelona: IEA.
- León, S. (2012), 'How do citizens attribute responsibility in multilevel states? Learning, biases and asymmetric federalism. Evidence from Spain', *Electoral Studies* 31 (1): 120–130.
- (2014), 'How does decentralization affect electoral competition of state-wide parties? Evidence from Spain', *Party Politics* 20 (3): 391–402.
- Marsh, M. (1998), 'Testing the second-order election model after four European elections', *British Journal of Political Science* 28: 591–607.
- Petrocik, J. R. (1996), 'Issue ownership in presidential elections, with a 1980 case study', *American Journal of Political Science* 40 (3): 825–850.
- Pogorelis, R., Maddens, B., Swenden, W. and Fabre, E. (2005), 'Issue salience in regional and national party manifestos in the UK', *West European Politics* 28 (5): 992–1014.
- Reif, K. and Schmitt, H. (1980), 'Nine second order national elections: A conceptual framework for the analysis of European election results', *European Journal of Political Research* 8: 3–44.
- Rodden, J. and Wibbels, E. (2011), 'Dual accountability and the nationalization of party competition: Evidence from four federations', *Party Politics* 17 (5): 629–653.
- Rogers, S.M. (2013), *Accountability in a federal system*. PhD dissertation, Department of Politics, Princeton University.

- Schakel, A.H. (2013a), 'Nationalisation of multilevel party systems: A conceptual and empirical analysis', *European Journal of Political Research* 52 (2): 212–236.
- (2013b), 'Congruence between regional and national elections', *Comparative Political Studies* 46 (5): 631–662.
- Schakel, A.H. and Jeffery, C. (2013), 'Are regional elections really 'second-order' elections?', *Regional Studies* 47 (3): 323–341.
- Schakel, A.H. and Dandoy, R. (2014), 'Electoral cycles and turnout in multilevel electoral systems', *West European Politics* 38 (6): 1305–1326.
- Schleicher, D. (2016), 'Federalism and state democracy', *Texas Law Review* 95; *Yale Law School, Public Law Research Paper* 562; *Yale Law and Economics Research Paper* 534. Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=2739791>.
- Stecker, C. (2015), 'Parties on the chain of federalism: Position-taking and multi-level party competition in Germany', *West European Politics* 38 (6): 1305–1326.
- Volden, C. (2005), 'Intergovernmental political competition in American Federalism', *American Journal of Political Science* 49 (2): 327–342.

Chapter 4

‘First-Order Thinking’ in Second-Order Contests: A Comparison of Local, Regional and European Elections in Spain²¹

Abstract

The second-order election model assumes that voting behaviour in sub-national and supra-national elections is nationally driven rather than motivated by level-specific concerns. Yet, there is surprisingly little evidence on whether individuals consider issues belonging to the specific arena being contested (‘first-order thinking’) and when they are more likely to do it. Using survey data from Spain between 1999 and 2015, this article aims to address this gap. Three types of the so-called second-order elections are compared. It is shown that the proportion of citizens reporting that they take into account level-specific issues is by far higher in local and regional elections than in elections to the European Parliament. The probability of considering level-specific issues in these elections depends on individuals’ resources and orientations. ‘First-order thinking’ is not equally common among people with different educational attainment, employment status, ideology or attitudes towards the European Union or the local and regional governments.

²¹ This article is under review at the journal *Electoral Studies*.

4.1 Introduction

The transfer of responsibilities from the national government to both supra-national and sub-national authorities has given rise to the proliferation of directly-elected institutions at different tiers of government in many countries. As a result, citizens have the chance to elect not just their national representatives, but also local, regional or, in the case of EU citizens, European ones.

For some, voters are able to correctly attribute political responsibilities between levels of government; they evaluate the performance of politicians in each level and reward or punish them accordingly, no matter what happens in the other electoral arenas. From this perspective, local, regional and/or European elections are rather independent from first-order national elections, they should be explored ‘on their own terms’, and few top-down spillovers or contamination effects should be expected (Abedi and Siaroff, 1999; Pallarés and Keating, 2003; Schakel and Jeffery, 2013).

For many, however, multi-level governance paves the way for the contamination between electoral arenas. A complex institutional setting where the competences for major public policies are split between different layers of government would increase the difficulty for citizens to get relevant information about policies and government performance in each level. In the face of such difficulties, citizens would simply take their cues from the national level to vote in sub-national and supra-national elections. According to this view, local, regional and European elections are second-order contests subordinated to – or contaminated by – the first-order national arena (Anderson, 2006; Gélinau and Remmer, 2006; Marsh, 1998; Reif and Schmitt, 1980; Rodden and Wibbels, 2011).

What is more likely is that the truth lies somewhere in-between these two extremes. ‘Second-orderness’ of sub-national and supra-national arenas is a matter of degree (Dandoy and Schakel, 2013; Van der Eijk, Franklin and Marsh, 1996). It varies between elections, over time, from place to place, and, as claimed here, also among individuals. This article develops and tests a micro-level approach to the study of second-order effects in sub-national and supra-national elections

analysing ‘issue contamination’. It is argued that in every election there are individuals that decide their vote – or whether to vote or not – on the basis of level-specific considerations (‘first-order thinking’) and individuals that make their decisions based on what is going on in a different arena. Using data from a set of election surveys in Spain conducted between 1999 and 2015, this article first compares the proportion of citizens that consider level-specific issues in local, regional and European elections, and then analyses which individual characteristics are associated with ‘first-order thinking’ in each of these elections. Individuals’ resources and political orientations are examined and are found to be relevant.

While several empirical studies have analyzed the second-order character of local, regional and European elections separately, there are no studies comparing the three of them. Only comparisons between local and European elections have been made so far in this regard (Heath *et al.*, 1999; Rallings and Thrasher, 2005; Skrinis and Teperoglou, 2008). In addition, and more importantly, most of the previous research on the role of national factors in sub-national and supra-national elections is based on aggregate-level data (namely, election results), which makes impossible to test the individual-level assumptions on which the second-order election model is based. This article provides a simultaneous comparison of three sorts of the so-called second-order elections, and relies on individual survey data.

The rest of this article is structured as follows. The next section presents a brief overview of previous research investigating the second-order character of European, regional and local elections. Section 3 develops the theoretical argument for this study, and then section 4 formulates two basic propositions about micro-level determinants affecting the probability of considering level-specific issues in second-order elections. Data source and method are introduced in section 5. After the presentation of the descriptive findings and regression results in section 6, the final section concludes.

4.2 The second-order election model, here and there

4.2.1 European elections, or the origins of the second-order election model

The concept of second-order elections was originally coined by Reif and Schmitt (1980) to refer to those elections in which there is ‘less at stake’ compared with the decisive presidential or parliamentary national elections. These scholars observed some regularities after analysing the first European elections (lower levels of voter turnout, electoral losses of the national government party, and electoral gains of smaller parties), concluding that the results of these elections held in 1979 in nine countries were not determined by factors belonging to the European political arena but by domestic political cleavages. Since then, numerous analyses of the successive European elections have shown similar results: in general, voters use elections to the European Parliament to reward or punish national governments in their respective countries rather than to express their preferences on European issues (Freire and Santana-Pereira, 2015; Hix and Marsh, 2007; 2011; Marsh, 1998; Reif, 1984; Schmitt, 2005; Van der Eijk, Franklin and Marsh, 1996).

However, the second-order nature of European elections has also been called into question. The second-order election model does not work in an enlarged Europe (Central and Eastern former communist countries) so well as it does in western European member states (Koepke and Ringe, 2006). Furthermore, there are at least two factors that can lead to an increase in ‘first-order thinking’ in European elections. First, the European Parliament has gained more legislative powers and responsibilities over the years, especially after the novelties brought by the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009. Second, European integration has become a prominent political issue. The 2008 economic crisis in the eurozone, and the austerity measures taken in response to it, have resulted in a growing public contestation over the European project (Armingeon, Guthmann and Weisstanner, 2016), often reflected in the electoral success of Eurosceptic political parties in many member states. Researchers have begun to raise the question whether European elections were

less second-order in 2014 than before (Brug, Gattermann and Vreese, 2016; Nielsen and Franklin, 2017; Schmitt and Toygür, 2016).

4.2.2 Regional elections as second-order elections, contradictory findings

The second-order election model developed by Reif and Schmitt to explain the results of the European elections has been profusely applied to the analysis of regional elections. Previous research in both Europe and America has often led to divergent findings. On the one hand, empirical studies have shown that regional election results are influenced by national rather than regional economic or political conditions (Anderson, 2006; Gélinau and Remmer, 2006; Rodden and Wibbels, 2011). On the other hand, a growing body of evidence indicates that many regional elections do not conform to the expectations of the second-order elections approach (see, for example, Schakel and Jeffery, 2013).

Institutional and contextual factors that raise the stakes of regional elections are considered to weaken second-order election effects, decreasing the degree of subordination of regional politics to national dynamics (Dandoy and Schakel, 2013; Jeffery and Hough, 2003; León, 2014; Schakel and Jeffery, 2013). Thus, higher levels of decentralization, the saliency of territorial cleavages, the presence of regionalist parties or non-simultaneity with other electoral contests would contribute to reduce the influence of national politics on regional elections.

4.2.3 Local elections, between first and second-order

In comparison to national, regional or European elections, there is not as much research out there about local elections, even when there are multiple reasons to care about local politics (Miller, 1988). The local council is the level of administration that is closest to the people and for this reason can meet more easily local needs, theoretically enhancing participation and accountability (Blair, 2000). The powers of local governments vary greatly between countries, but commonly they are responsible for providing a wide range of local services and

facilities in areas such as culture, social services, local roads, public transport or the environment.

In most countries local election are considered to be just a ‘national referendum’ on the popularity of the government (Curtice and Payne, 1991) or a ‘barometer’ to predict the results of the subsequent national elections (Jérôme and Lewis-Beck, 1999). Nevertheless, as with the regional elections, the empirical evidence is mixed. Studies on UK, Spain, Belgium and the Netherlands suggest that local elections are not as second-order in nature as previously assumed. According to these studies, local elections are in a middle position between first and second-order elections (Delgado, 2010; Heath *et al.*, 1999; Lefevere and Van Aelst, 2014; Marien, Dassonneville and Hooghe, 2015; Rallings and Thrasher, 2005). They are still considered second-order elections but to a lesser extent than European elections because level-specific considerations seem to play a major role in determining vote choices in local elections. Heath and his co-authors (1999) put it like this: ‘If the elections to the European Parliament are regarded as second-order, then we might think of elections to local councils as “one and three-quarters order”.’ (p.391).

4.3 Turning to the micro-level

The literature on second-order elections makes important assumptions about voter’s behaviour in order to explain the regularities that are found in aggregated election results. However, these assumptions tend to remain in a black box. Scholars have already started to recognize the need to check out the degree to which these assumptions are accurate and valid (Carrubba and Timpone, 2005; Clark and Rohrschneider, 2009; Hobolt and Wittrock, 2011; Schmitt, Sanz and Braun, 2008). For instance, Clark and Rohrschneider (2009) write the following: ‘The gap in our knowledge mainly results from the focus of most second-order elections models on aggregate election outcomes. This is somewhat surprising given that the logic of the argument attributes special importance to the perceptions of individuals in deciding how to cast their ballot’ (p.648). Hobolt and Wittrock (2011) share the same concern about the second-order literature warning

about ‘the lack of an explicit individual-level model of vote choice to explain the aggregated-level regularities’ (p.30). And Schmitt, Sanz and Braun (2008) complain about the scarcity of individual-level analysis recognizing that ‘the mechanisms that determine vote patterns in second-order elections cannot reliably be judged from the analysis of aggregate data’ (p.4). Despite the progress that has been made in the analysis of the micro-foundations of the second-order election model, there has been little research explicitly aimed at analyzing the fundamental question of when individuals are more or less likely to consider issues belonging to the specific arena being contested.

4.3.1. Defining ‘issue contamination’ and ‘first-order thinking’

The assumptions of the second-order election model can be best approached by formulating and testing hypothesis about individual’s behaviour. What we have learnt so far about voting behaviour from studies at the national level is that political issues matter (Key, 1966; Nie, Verba and Petrocik, 1980). Individual electoral decisions are based on preferences for issues, as well as for parties and candidates. The first and probably the most basic premise of the second-order election model is that, instead of holding responsible sub-national and supra-national representatives for their actions on the according level, citizens decide whether to vote and for whom on the grounds of issues and events belonging to a most relevant level. So far most of the previous research assumes that this level is systematically the national one. Nevertheless, this might not always be the case. Contamination effects have been defined as ‘a situation where either voters or party elites determine their political behaviour on the basis of other arenas, rather than the specific arena being contested’ (Guinjoan, 2014: 19). Thus defined, this can occur from one to any other level, and it can operate in any direction. For instance, it is reasonable to expect that what is going on at the regional level, and not only at the national one, might affect voting behaviour in local elections. The relevant question is not so much where is the source (or sources) of ‘issue contamination’, but which factors contribute to mitigate this phenomenon.

This article argues that, at the micro-level, in a given election there are individuals that decide their vote – or whether to vote or not – on the basis of level-specific issues (what here is called ‘first-order thinking’) and individuals that make their vote choices based on exogenous considerations. For example, voter A may cast a ballot in a specific regional election after evaluating the performance of the regional incumbent in regional-level issues, while voter B may vote in the same regional election keeping his eyes on the national government and its responsibilities. Voters that ‘think nationally’ in sub-national and supra-national elections, like voter B does, are in fact treating these contests as second-order elections, secondary in relevance with respect to the first order national political arena. By contrast, individuals making their choices as a result of level-specific factors, like voter A does, are treating sub-national and supra-national elections as first-order arenas, considering what is really at stake. The individual propensity to look at level-specific issues might depend on individual-level factors. This is precisely what this article aims to examine.

At the macro-level, each election will show a different distribution of voters depending on the amount of citizens thinking in level-specific issues, that is: local issues in local elections, regional issues in regional elections, and European issues in elections to the European Parliament. A high degree of polarization around a national issue can make that more citizens take into account national factors to vote in sub-national or supra-national election. For example, in a local election A with 100 individuals the distribution of voters influenced by local versus national factors can be 90-10. If the following local election B in the same municipality is held just after the revelation of a big corruption scandal affecting the national incumbent, the distribution would probably change in favour of those voters who are nationally driven. Thus, in this example, election B will show in aggregated terms a higher degree of ‘second-orderness’ than election A because the proportion of citizens with ‘first-order thinking’ is lower.

Both mass media and political parties might play an important role. The media has the capacity to place certain political issues at the heart of the public debate as research on agenda-setting has proved long ago (McCombs and Shaw, 1972).

Political parties, in turn, develop electoral strategies by giving salience to national or level-specific topics during the second-order election campaign (Cabeza, Gómez and Alonso, 2017). This article does not attempt to analyse the role of mass media or political parties in fostering or discouraging the salience of level-specific issues. Rather, it focuses on some micro-level factors that might potentially induce ‘first-order thinking’ in second-order elections. As will be argued below, these factors are related with individuals’ resources and motivations.

4.4 The individual determinants of ‘first-order thinking’

This section formulates two basic propositions about micro-level determinants affecting the likelihood of considering level-specific issues in second-order elections. Some specific hypotheses are then derived from each proposition. One could reasonably expect that the likelihood of developing ‘first-order thinking’ in local, regional and European contests is a joint function of the individual’s ability to distinguish between levels (resource-based approach) and his or her political orientations (motivation-based approach). This classic distinction is borrowed from the literature on political participation (Verba and Nie, 1987).

4.4.1 Resource-based approach

Making vote choices in multi-level states is not an easy task. To find clear-cut divisions between the competencies of each level of administration is rather unusual. Governmental responsibilities are often intertwined among different levels of government. The ability of citizens to distinguish between levels and to correctly attribute political responsibilities might depend on individuals’ political sophistication, resources and capabilities. The first proposition is formulated as follows:

(H1) Individuals with higher political sophistication, resources and capacity to process complex political information are more likely to consider level-specific issues in local, regional and European elections.

Regarding political sophistication, ‘first-order thinking’ is expected to increase with the exposure to political information related with the specific arena, that is, with the level of interest that individuals have in following the election campaign (H1.1). But individuals’ resources and capabilities also depend on more general personal attributes, such as socio-economic characteristics. It is well known that socially disadvantaged citizens, those jobless or with less education or income tend to vote at a lower rates than those with a higher socioeconomic status (Lijphart, 1997; Verba and Nie, 1987). Do the level of education and the employment situation affect in a similar way the presence of ‘first-order thinking’ among citizens in second-order elections? The likelihood of considering level-specific issues in local, regional and European elections is expected to increase with the level of education (H1.2) and to be higher for employed individuals than for those unemployed, retired or out of the workforce (H1.3).

4.4.2 Motivation-based approach

Individuals must not only be capable of distinguishing among levels, but also be inclined to do it. The second proposition of this article is formulated as follows:

(H2) Changes in the likelihood of taking into account level-specific issues respond to different political orientations, beliefs and preferences

The main premise behind this proposition is that individuals should perceive that the second-order arena is important in order to develop ‘first-order thinking’. Two factors are considered to be relevant: policy preferences on the ideological and territorial dimensions, and attitudes towards Europe and the local and regional governments.

Policy preferences on the ideological (left-right) and territorial dimensions (centre-periphery) are expected to play an important role. These are the two core dimensions of party competition in multi-level states (Elias, Szöcsik and Zuber, 2015), and they are closely associated with attitudes towards the different political arenas.

Starting with the centre-periphery dimension, there are a wide variety of very different preferences regarding the territorial organization of the state. Some individuals advocate for decentralization or even support the secession of a region from the nation-state, while others are favourable to centralization or prefer a unitary state. The former are expected to be more inclined to take into account level-specific issues in second-order elections than the latter (H2.1). Support for a regionalist party is used as proxy for positions in favour of decentralization.

The relationship between regional identity and ‘first-order thinking’ is rather straightforward in regional elections. As recent evidence has demonstrated, regional issues play a major role vis-à-vis national considerations in voting decisions among voters with strong regional identity feelings (Liñeira, 2016). Regionalist voters would probably be more involved with regional politics and more motivated to gather political information about issues and events taking place at the regional level. However, regionalist supporters are also expected to develop ‘first-order thinking’ in other levels such as the European or the local. Although there are exceptions inside this party family in several countries, regionalist parties tend to support European integration (Marks, Wilson and Ray, 2002). Europe is perceived more as an ally against the central state than as an enemy to the aspirations of autonomy among the regions (Jolly, 2007). Previous research has found that regionalist identity is associated with pro-EU attitudes among voters (Chacha, 2013; Jolly, 2014). In local elections, regional identities might also promote ‘first-order thinking’, as regionalist supporters might be more inclined to care about local rather than national issues.

Regarding the position of the voters on the left-right dimension, different expectations are held for sub- and supra-national elections. Extreme right and extreme left ideologies are classically associated with negative attitudes towards the EU, while voters in more moderate and centrist positions are more likely to support European integration (Hix, 2007). For this reason, the self-placement of individuals on the left-right scale is expected to have an inverted-U shape relationship with ‘first-order thinking’ in elections to the European Parliament. That is, extreme ideologies in both the right and the left impair, whereas moderate

positions facilitate that citizens take into account European issues in European elections (H2.2.1).

This expectation changes for local and regional levels. Previous research has found that while parties on the economic right support decentralization more often than economic left-wing parties, conservatism on the cultural dimension is associated with positions against decentralization (Toubeau and Wagner, 2015). Conservative ideologies are often linked to the preservation of the national unity and the territorial integrity of the country. Culturally liberal parties and their supporters, by contrast, tend to adopt more favourable positions towards the decentralization of decision-making to sub-national units. The relationship between left-right ideology and decentralization is susceptible to differ from country to country. In Spain, effectively, the conservative right-wing People's Party represents Spanish nationalism, while the left-wing PSOE advocates for a more federal and decentralized state (Gómez and Cabeza, 2013). The enduring monopolisation of patriotism by the right has led to many Spanish left-wing citizens to support decentralization and to reject Spanish national identity and symbols (Ruiz Jiménez, González-Fernández and Jiménez Sánchez, 2015). For the Spanish case, due to their stronger attachment to the national level, right-wing individuals are expected to be less likely to develop 'first-order thinking' in local and regional elections than individuals with left-wing political orientations (H2.2.2).

Finally, attitudes towards Europe and the local and regional governments are expected to affect 'first-order thinking' in second-order elections. In sub-national elections, government performance might influence the extent to which citizens take into account level-specific issues. Attention towards what is going on in the specific level is susceptible to increase under two situations: when the level-specific government is very popular and when it is not popular at all. In other words, the likelihood of considering level-specific issues increases with extreme government evaluations (H2.3.1). At the European level, pro-EU attitudes are expected to be associated with 'first-order thinking' in elections to the European Parliament (H2.3.2).

Table 1 summarizes all the expectations.

Table 1
Summary of expectations

(H1) Individuals with higher political sophistication, resources and capacity to process complex political information are more likely to consider level-specific issues in local, regional and European elections	
Variable	The likelihood to consider level-specific issues...
Exposure to political information	...increases with the interest in the election campaign.
Education	...increases with the level of education.
Employment status	...is higher for employed.
(H2) Changes in the likelihood to take into account level-specific issues in local, regional and European elections respond to different political orientations, beliefs and preferences	
Variable	The likelihood to consider level-specific issues...
Position on the territorial dimension	...is higher for regionalist supporters.
Position on the left-right dimension	...is lower for individuals in the far-right and the far-left (in European elections). ...is lower for right-wing individuals (in local & regional elections).
Attitudes towards second-order arena	...increases with positive attitudes towards the EU (in European elections). ...increase with extreme government evaluations (in local & regional elections).

4.5 Data, case and methods

Voter turnout or party gains and losses in sub-national or supra-national elections compared to the preceding national election are frequently used as dependent variables in order to measure the level of ‘second-orderness’ of non national elections. In many cases, the empirical focus is on dissimilarity indexes between election results (Schakel, 2011). The logic behind this approach is that sub-national and supra-national elections are more influenced by national factors the less their results deviate from national election results. But similarities in vote shares do not imply that national-level factors play a role on vote choices in sub-national and supra-national elections. Citizens may choose the same political party across elections because they prefer similar policies to be implemented at

different levels of government. Or they can still make the same vote choice based on different level-specific considerations. The use of aggregate data does not seem appropriate if one intends to disentangle whether individuals' choices are based on level-specific issues or not.

4.5.1 The Spanish case

This article employs individual-level data from the Spanish case. Spain constitutes an ideal case to investigate when and why level-specific considerations play a role in vote decisions at sub-national and supra-national levels. Within a short period of time, Spain has evolved from an hypercentralist state to a highly decentralized country with 17 powerful regions, constitutional recognition of the principle of local self-government and an active role in the process of Europeanization (Moreno, 2001). Internal heterogeneity provides a quasi-experimental setting. In the same country (that is, controlling for common institutional characteristics) there are great territorial disparities.

From a practical point of view, the Spanish case offers an additional advantage due to the availability of survey data: the *Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas* (CIS), a public research institute, conduct highly informative surveys for elections at local, regional and European levels.

4.5.2 Measuring 'first-order thinking'

Post-election surveys carried out for local, regional and European elections in Spain by the CIS often include a direct question on the subjective relevance attributed to national versus level-specific issues in vote decisions. The use of such a direct question to assess citizens' motivations has been criticised because responses may be subject to social desirability bias (Liñeira, 2016). It would be wrong to assume that the potential bias due to social desirability does not exist at all. Undoubtedly, respondents may find reasonable to answer that they take into account local issues in local elections, regional issues in regional elections, and European issues in European elections. However, Figure 1 suggests that this is not always the case. The proportion of respondents reporting that they think about

level-specific issues changes a lot between different types of elections, being in fact very low for European elections. Furthermore, over time patterns, and also differences from region to region (for instance between ordinary and historic regions) conform to literature predictions. Thus, it appears reasonable and feasible to use this direct question. After all, the bias should not be problematic if the arguments are based not as much in absolute values for each level but in relative values, i.e.: differences between levels.

For European elections, the question is asked as follows:

Personally, when deciding your vote (or whether to vote or not) in the last elections to the European Parliament, what did you take into account or what has most influenced your decision?

The issues related with the European Union and the European Parliament

The issues related with the current political situation in Spain

Elections to the European Parliament are held in Spain since 1987, although the question was first included in the surveys in 1994, after the third European election.

In a similar way, post-election surveys of regional elections frequently ask the following:

Personally, when deciding your vote (or whether to vote or not) in the last parliamentary election in [region's name], what did you take into account or what has most influenced your decision?

The issues of [region's name]

The issues of Spain

Spain is made up of 17 autonomous regions (*Comunidades Autónomas*). Elections are held simultaneously in 13 out of the 17 regions, the ordinary regions. The historic regions, Catalonia, Galicia and the Basque Country, and also Andalusia have their own electoral calendar and held elections on a specific date set by their respective regional parliaments. For the 13 ordinary regions that hold regional

elections at the same time, the relevant survey question is included in 1995, 1999, 2007, 2011 and 2015. In the case of Catalonia, Galicia, the Basque Country and Andalusia, the question is asked only in one post-election survey: 2015 in the former, 2012 in the three latter.

The question is practically identical in post-elections surveys for local elections. In that case, however, an additional response option is given to the respondents making reference to the regional level:

Personally, when deciding your vote (or whether to vote or not) in the last City Council elections in [city's name], what did you take into account or what has most influenced your decision?

The issues of [city's name]

The issues of [region's name]

The issues of Spain

In Spain there are more than 8.000 municipalities. Local elections in all the country are held on the same date as the regional elections in the 13 ordinary regions. The CIS conduct post-election surveys in four cities which vary considerably in population size: Barcelona (1,6 million inhabitants), Sevilla (close to 694.000 inhabitants), Vitoria (close to 244.000 inhabitants) and Santiago de Compostela (95.800 inhabitants). The question is included in the following surveys: 1995, 2007, 2011 and 2015.

Sometimes there are little changes in the wording of the question. In some cases, the question is included in pre-election instead of post-election surveys leading to small variations. These differences are nevertheless slight and, as long as the general meaning is the same, may not affect comparability of data.

4.5.3 Multivariate analysis

This article uses logistic regression analysis to model the individual's probability of considering level-specific issues. Local, regional and European elections are analysed in three models.

Full micro data files are publicly available only from 1998 onwards. That means that the multivariate analysis will not include data from the surveys conducted in 1994 (European elections) and 1995 (regional and local elections). However, it is possible to obtain summary measures such as the frequency distributions for the relevant question and this information is used in Figure 1. Surveys for the regional elections held in 1999 should also be discarded for the multivariate analysis because not all the independent variables were present in the questionnaires.

The available survey data containing the relevant question have been merged in order to create three different pooled datasets: local, regional and European elections, respectively. After dropping the cases with missing values, the total number of individuals in the three datasets is N=6,925 for local elections (three elections from 2007 to 2015 in four municipalities), N=47,765 for regional elections (three elections from 2007 to 2015 in thirteen ordinary regions; 2012 in Andalusia, Galicia and Basque Country; and 2015 in Catalonia) and N=13,831 for the European elections (four state-wide elections from 1999 to 2014) (see Appendix).

The dependent variable in the multivariate analysis is ‘first-order thinking’ constructed from the responses to the questions introduced above. It is measured by a dichotomous variable where 1 indicates that the individual reports to take mainly into account level-specific issues (i.e. local issues in local elections, regional issues in regional elections and European issues in European elections), and 0 otherwise.

In order to test the first proposition (resource-based approach) the following independent variables are included in the models: interest in the election campaign, education, and employment status. The level of interest in the election campaign is measured in a scale from less to more interest. Education and employment status are measured as categorical variables.

Regarding the second proposition (motivation-based approach) three independent variables are included in each model. First, support for a regionalist party is measured as a dichotomous variable, with value 1 if the respondent has voted for

a regionalist party either in level-specific or in national elections, and 0 otherwise. Second, ideology is included as a categorical variable with five values: left, centre-left, centre, centre-right and right. Finally, for European elections, a variable about general attitudes towards the EU is included in the model, measured in a 7-point scale from ‘totally against’ to ‘totally in favour’. For local and regional elections, this variable is replaced by the retrospective evaluation of local or regional governments respectively, measured as a categorical variable: very bad, bad, average, good, very good.

The focus of this article is on individual-level determinants of ‘first-order thinking’. Nevertheless, the conditions under which individuals are expected to distinguish between levels of government are also potentially affected by contextual factors. Both as shown below in Figure 1 and as suggested by previous research, the state of the economy matters (Schakel, 2015). Therefore, unemployment rate is included in the model. The likelihood to consider issues belonging to the specific arena being contested is expected to decrease when unemployment grows.

The percentage of respondents considering level-specific issues in regional elections also increases in regions that have their own election calendar, that is, in Andalusia, Catalonia, Basque Country and Galicia (Figure 1). Previous empirical analysis have shown that second-order election effects are larger when several regional elections are held on the same day (Schakel and Jeffery, 2013). Furthermore, there is a negative relationship between the extent of second-order election effects in regional elections and the level of decentralization (León, 2014). The influence of national politics on regional elections decreases when more powers are transferred to the regional government. Those regions in which the level of authority is higher are frequently the ones in which there is a salient territorial cleavage, a distinct history and/or language, and a party system characterized by the presence of non state-wide parties. All these factors contribute to focus the debate on regional issues. For these reasons, two dummy variables are included in the statistical model for regional elections: one for

Andalusia and another for the three historic regions: Catalonia, Basque Country and Galicia.

Finally, among the contextual factors that can affect the degree of ‘second-orderness’ of local elections, previous research has point out to the size of the municipality. Voters in small-sized towns pay more attention to local politics and, for instance, they are more likely to deviate from their national partisan preferences. By contrast, in big cities the saliency of local politics is lower and national issues are expected to have a greater effect on vote choices (Marien, Dassonneville and Hooghe, 2015; Schleicher, 2016). Therefore, size of the municipality is included in the model for local elections.

In all the statistical models, cluster-robust standard errors by survey are calculated to account for the clustered structure of the data.

4.6 Results

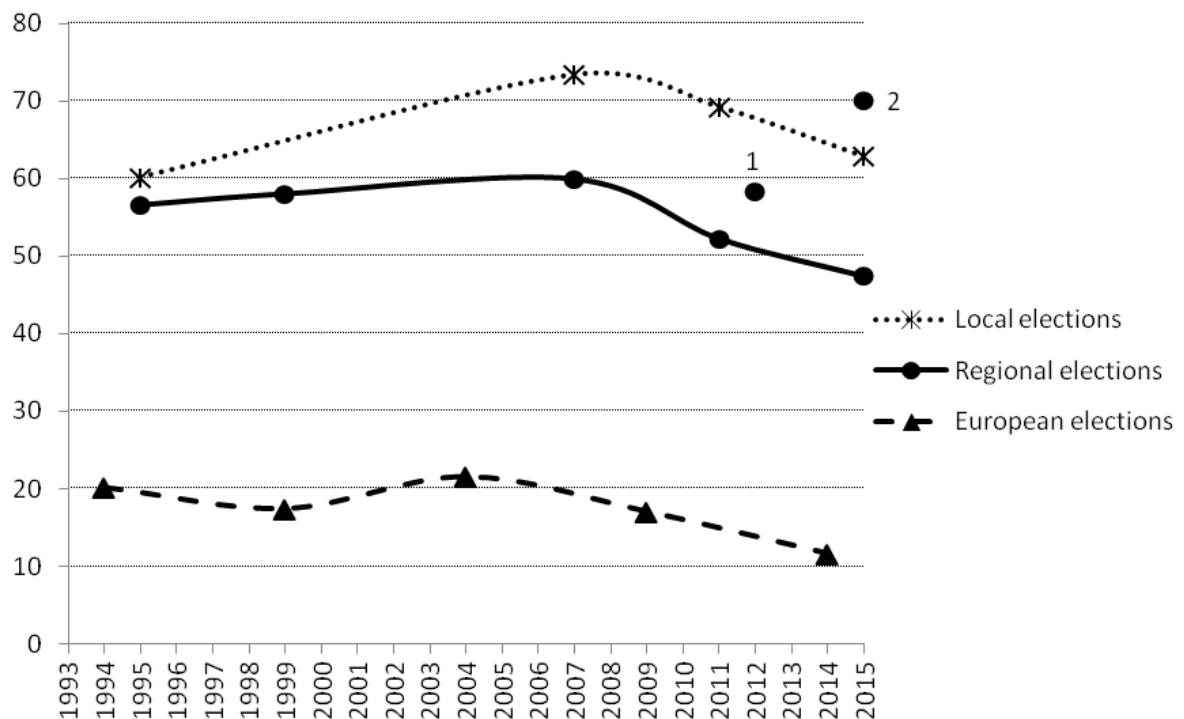
4.6.1 How many citizens report to vote on the basis of level-specific issues?

Before presenting the results of the multivariate analysis, Figure 1 shows the proportion of respondents reporting that they vote on the basis of level-specific issues in local, regional and European elections. It may come as no surprise that ‘first-order thinking’ is rather unusual in European elections. Only between 10 and 20 per cent of the Spanish population decide whether to vote and for whom in elections to the European Parliament thinking in European issues. Far more striking is the fact that rather than increasing, the figure has decreased over time since 2004 reaching its lower level in the 2014 European elections, the most important European elections to date as stated on the European Parliament’s website. Under the official slogan ‘This time it’s different’, the 2014 European elections were expected to prompt greater interest among citizens specially because for the first time there was a closer link between election outcomes and the appointment of the president of the European Commission (Gyárfášová, 2017). Despite this, and despite the increasing attention towards European politics

due to the economic crisis and the rise of Euroscepticism, the majority of the Spanish population made their choices in the 2014 European elections according to national considerations, just as before.

Figure 1

Percentage of respondents reporting to take level-specific issues into account



Note: In local elections, average in Barcelona, Sevilla, Vitoria and Santiago de Compostela. In regional elections, average in the thirteen regions which hold regional elections in the same day. Regions with their own electoral calendar:

¹ Average in Andalusia, Galicia and Basque Country (2012)

² Catalonia (2015).

While the elections to the European Parliament are mostly nationally driven, local and regional elections present a very different picture. A clear majority of respondents (between 60 and 75 per cent) report that they take mainly into account local issues to decide their vote in local elections. ‘First-order thinking’ in regional elections is also high. On average, around 50 or 60 per cent of the respondents in ordinary regions have regional issues in mind when they are called

to the ballot boxes in regional elections. The figure rises in regions which have their own electoral calendar. In Catalonia, for example, 7 out of 10 respondents reported to take into account regional issues in 2015, more than 20 points above than the average for the 13 regions with simultaneous elections. These differences between regions are consistent with previous empirical findings suggesting that the degree of subordination of regional politics to national dynamics decreases when regional elections are not held at the same time, or in regions with a salient centre-periphery cleavage (León, 2014; Schakel and Jeffery, 2013).

The last thing that stands out from the data presented in Figure 1 is that local, regional and European elections share a very similar pattern of change over time. Since 2007 there is a decrease in ‘first-order thinking’ in the three elections simultaneously. This decrease seems to be related with the economic situation. Previous research has shown that the state of the economy is key to understand second-order election effects (Schakel, 2015). The decline of the national government popularity in times of economic downturn is expected to boost second-order election effects in non-national elections. Negative economic growth or increasing unemployment may lead voters to turn to national issues in local, regional and European elections because citizens tend to attribute the responsibility for the economic situation to the national government. In fact, when the economy deteriorates national government parties end up losing vote share not only in sub-national elections (Rogers 2013; Schleicher 2016) but also in elections to the European Parliament (Clark and Rohrschneider, 2009). In sum, as shown in Figure 1, when the economy turns down, people seem less inclined to consider issues belonging to the specific arena being contested.

4.6.2 When are individuals more likely to take into account level-specific issues?

Coefficients reported in Table 2 show which groups of respondents are more likely to consider level-specific issues in each election. The results are mostly in line with the expectations formulated in section 3.

Table 2
Results of logistic regressions

	Local elections		Regional elections		European elections	
	Coef.	Robust S.E.	Coef.	Robust S.E.	Coef.	Robust S.E.
Resources						
Empl. Status						
Employed (ref.cat.)						
Unemployed	-0.292***	(0.068)	-0.091**	(0.031)	-0.088**	(0.033)
Retired	-0.018	(0.108)	-0.080**	(0.031)	-0.030	(0.036)
Other	-0.139	(0.094)	-0.091*	(0.041)	-0.048	(0.065)
Education						
No formal educ. (ref.cat.)						
Primary	0.014	(0.140)	-0.091	(0.075)	0.208	(0.109)
Secondary	0.190*	(0.094)	-0.140	(0.072)	0.327***	(0.093)
Tertiary	0.329***	(0.102)	-0.054	(0.089)	0.610***	(0.125)
Interest in campaign	0.041	(0.054)	0.022	(0.016)	0.205***	(0.029)
Political motivation						
Regionalist	0.188	(0.189)	1.272***	(0.161)	0.160**	(0.069)
Ideology						
Left (ref.cat.)						
Center-Left	0.287*	(0.137)	0.110	(0.072)	0.026	(0.096)
Center	0.271**	(0.103)	-0.119	(0.077)	-0.022	(0.152)
Center-R.	-0.022	(0.171)	-0.141	(0.080)	-0.073	(0.162)
Right	-0.553*	(0.231)	-0.342***	(0.106)	-0.048	(0.157)
Gov. evaluation						
Very bad (ref.cat.)						
Bad	-0.216**	(0.072)	0.089	(0.055)	-	-
Average	-0.267*	(0.119)	0.199*	(0.078)	-	-
Good	-0.314*	(0.142)	0.396***	(0.104)	-	-
Very good	-0.203	(0.148)	0.399*	(0.158)	-	-
Attitudes EU	-	-	-	-	0.254***	(0.013)
Contextual factors						
Unempl. rate	-0.014	(0.011)	-0.012*	(0.005)	-0.019**	(0.008)
Size Municip.	-0.187*	(0.094)	-	-	-	-
Region type						
Historic	-	-	0.115	(0.108)	-	-
Andalusia	-	-	0.541***	(0.084)	-	-
Constant	1.991***	(0.594)	0.221	(0.163)	-3.409***	(0.095)
N	6,925		47,765		13,831	
Pseudo R ²	0.0208		0.0347		0.0380	

*** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05. Standard errors clustered by survey. Dependent variable: 'First-order thinking' (1=Yes; 0=No)

Starting with the variables measuring individuals' resources, to be unemployed has a negative influence on 'first-order thinking' in the three types of contests analysed here. That is, individuals who are unemployed are less likely than those having a job to consider level-specific issues in local, regional and European elections.

To facilitate interpretation of the statistical results, table 3 reports the expected probability of considering level-specific issues in each type of election for respondents with and without employment. After holding other factors constant, being unemployed decreases the probability of 'first-order thinking' by 6 points in local election, 2 points in regional elections and 1 point in European elections.

Table 3

Expected probability of 'first-order thinking' according to employment status

	Employed	Unemployed	Difference Column 2 - Column 1
Local elections	70.7%	64.4%	-6.2
Regional elections	56.2%	54.0%	-2.1
European elections	18.0%	16.8%	-1.2

As to the level of education, the coefficients are significant and in the expected direction for local and European elections. Higher education increases 'first-order thinking' in both types of elections. However, this does not hold for regional elections, where there are no statistically significant differences with regard to education. Table 4 shows the expected probability of considering level-specific issues comparing respondents with lower and higher educational attainment. The effect of education entails an increase of 7 points in the probability of considering level-specific issues in local elections. In European elections the probability of 'first-order thinking' among individuals with university degree is more than 8 points higher than among individuals with no formal education. Significant coefficients with regard to education for European and, to a lesser degree, local

elections, may follow from the fact that political knowledge is particularly important in these instances.

Table 4

Expected probability of ‘first-order thinking’ according to level of education

	No formal Education	Tertiary education	Difference Column 2 - Column 1
Local elections	65.7%	72.5%	6.9
Regional elections ^a	57.5%	56.2%	-1.3
European elections	13.2%	21.6%	8.4

^a Differences are not statistically significant

The last variable regarding resources is interest in the election campaign. While there is a positive relationship between the level of interest in the campaign and ‘first-order thinking’ in European elections, the coefficients of this variable for local and regional elections fail to meet statistical significance. To follow the election campaign with interest does not translate into an increase in ‘first-order thinking’ in sub-national elections. This could possibly be explained by the fact that election campaigns are not always dominated by issues belonging to the specific arena being contested. Far from promoting the clarity of responsibilities, politicians frequently wilfully contribute to blur the responsibilities of each level. There has been evidence showing that political parties emphasize national issues during regional election campaigns to gain electoral advantage (Cabeza, Gómez and Alonso, 2017).

Turning to political motivations, regionalist voters as compared with the rest of respondents are more likely to consider level-specific issues in regional and in European elections. While in European elections the effect is very moderate, being a regionalist voter increase in as many as 27 points the probability of ‘first-order thinking’ in regional elections (Table 5). In local elections the difference does not reach statistical significance. In fact, many regionalist voters report to take into account regional issues in local elections.

Table 5

Expected probability of ‘first-order thinking’ according to regionalist supporter

	Non regionalist supporter	Regionalist supporter	Difference Column 2 - Column 1
Local elections ^a	68.6%	72.4%	3.8
Regional elections	52.1%	79.3%	27.2
European elections	17.4%	19.8%	2.3

^a Differences are not statistically significant

The hypothesis on the U-shaped relationship between ideology and ‘first-order thinking’ in European elections is not supported, as coefficients are not statistically significant. To be left or right-wing oriented does not significantly affect the probability of considering level-specific issues in elections to the European Parliament. This result may be specific to the Spanish case. Unlike in other countries, anti-European parties are totally irrelevant in terms of electoral support in Spain. In spite of the erosion of the traditional positive image of the European Union reflected in the Spanish surveys, the economic crisis has not led so far to the emergence of strong euroscepticism in the Spanish party system, neither on the left nor on the right (Gómez-Reino and Plaza, 2016). However, consistent with the expectations described in section 3, ideology matters in sub-national elections: individuals with right-wing political orientation are less likely to consider level-specific issues in local and regional elections than individuals who endorse left-wing ideologies (Table 6).

Table 6

Expected probability of ‘first-order thinking’ according to ideology

	Left	Center-left	Center	Center-right	Right	Difference Col.5 – Col.1
Local elections	66.0%	72.0%	71.1%	65.5%	53.1%	-12.9
Regional elections	56.5%	59.0%	53.6%	53.1%	48.3%	-8.2
European elections ^a	17.9%	18.2%	17.5%	16.8%	17.2%	-0.7

^a Differences are not statistically significant

Finally, regarding the attitudes towards the European Union and the local and regional governments, coefficients in Table 2 are statistically significant in the three types of election. On the one hand, as expected, the chances of considering level-specific issues in elections to the European Parliament increase with favourable opinions about the European Union. The expected probability of ‘first-order thinking’ is nearly 18 points higher among individuals totally in favour of the European Union with respect to those totally against. On the other hand, government performance does not have the same effect in local and regional elections.

Figure 2

Expected probability of ‘first-order thinking’ according to government evaluation

Figure 2A. Local elections

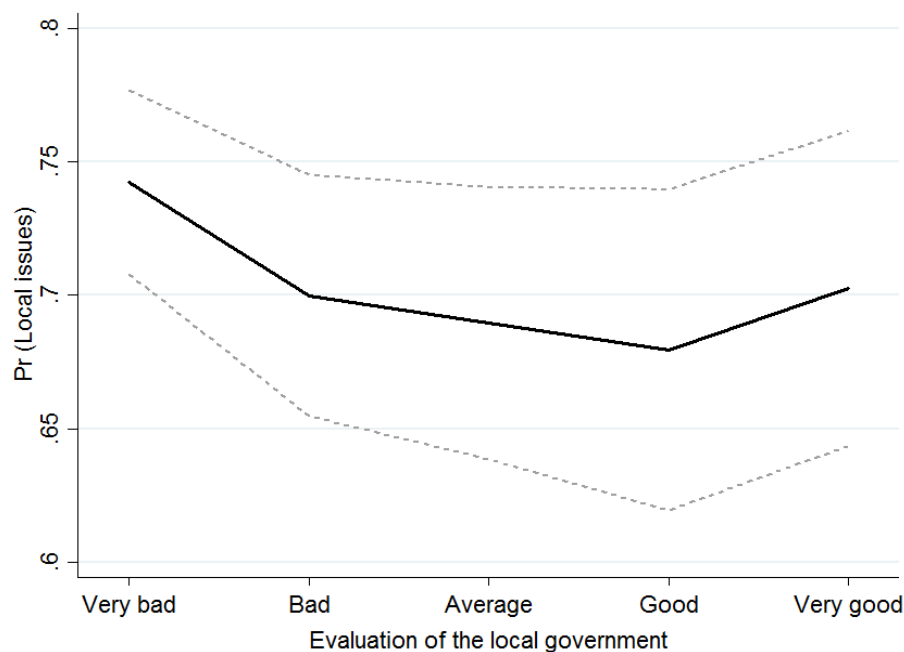
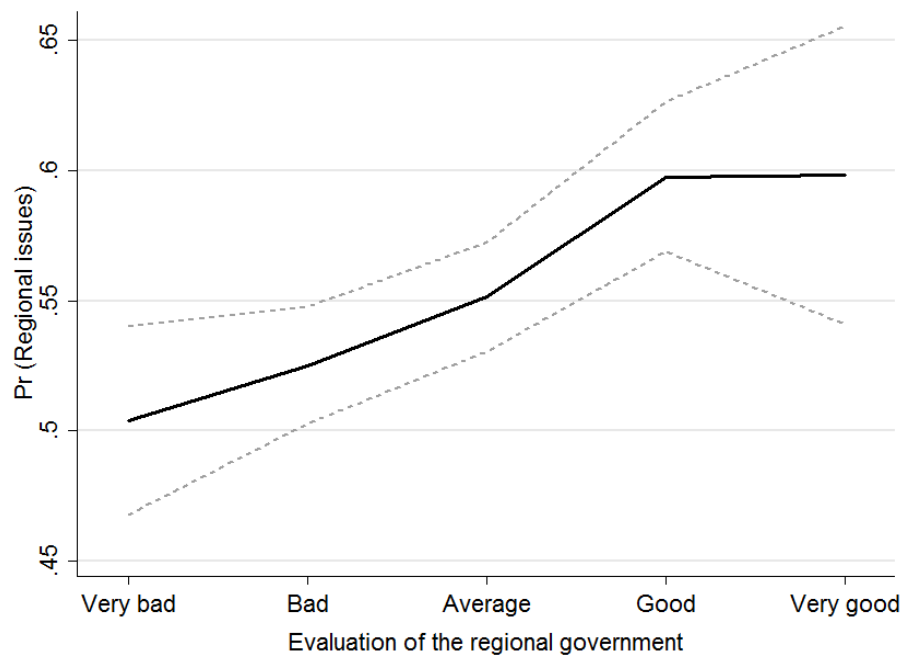


Figure 2B. Regional elections



In local elections, in line with the expectations described in section 3, extremely bad or good government evaluations are associated with an increase in the probability of considering level-specific issues (Figure 2A). This increase, however, is very small. The difference is slightly higher in regional elections. Positive retrospective evaluations of the regional government increase the likelihood of considering regional issues (Figure 2B). But unpopularity does not result in an increase in ‘first-order thinking’.

4.6.3 Does ‘first-order thinking’ matter?

There would be no need to worry about whether and when individuals consider level-specific issues if there were no consequences in terms of voting behaviour. For this reason, although it goes beyond the objectives of this article, it might be useful to conclude with some descriptive evidence on the relationship between ‘first-order thinking’ and the behaviour of voters in local, regional and European elections. Table 7 shows that ‘first-order thinking’ is systematically lower among citizens that end up abstaining from voting, and systematically higher among people defecting from the party they voted for in the last national elections. This

applies to local, regional and European elections alike, providing reasonable grounds to believe that thinking or not in level-specific issues has electoral consequences.

Table 7

Percentage of respondents reporting to take level-specific issues into account according to voting behaviour (n in parenthesis)

	European elections	Regional election	Local elections
Vote for a different party than in national elections	21.6% (541)	62.3% (2,253)	78.6% (431)
Vote while having abstained in national elec.	19.6% (306)	59.6% (1,533)	74.4% (245)
Vote for the same party than in national elections	18.0% (8,104)	55.5% (32,903)	69.2% (4,462)
Abstain	15.1% (2,469)	45.5% (8,702)	63.6% (1,705)

4.7 Conclusions

Previous literature, based mainly on aggregate data, has focused on analysing whether sub-national and supra-national elections are second-order contests subordinated to national politics. In many cases, the conclusion researchers came to was affirmative. Nevertheless, research findings depend largely on research questions. The present study has reversed the aforementioned question. Thus, it aimed to analyse how many citizens report to make their electoral choices on the basis of level-specific issues in local, regional and European elections, and when they are more likely to do it.

The most immediate conclusion in this study is perhaps that sub-national elections are not comparable to European elections with regard to the extension of ‘issue contamination’. This result is in line with a stream of research that considers that the second-order election model does not travel well from the context in which it

was originated, the elections to the European Parliament, to local or regional elections (Schakel and Jeffery, 2013). Whereas only a minority takes European issues into account when voting in European elections, the majority of people report that local and regional issues determine their behaviour in local and regional elections, respectively. Furthermore, in spite of the greater politicization of the European project after the 2008 economic crisis, no upward trend in ‘first-order thinking’ is detected in European elections.

Two micro-level determinants potentially inducing ‘first-order thinking’ in second-order elections were examined. This article proposed that the likelihood of considering issues belonging to the specific arena being contested depends on individual’s resources and his or her political orientations. With respect to individual’s resources, employment status and education are found to be relevant, especially in local and European elections. ‘First-order thinking’ increases with the level of education and is higher among those with a job in comparison to unemployed persons. As for political orientations, pro-EU attitudes are positively associated with ‘first-order thinking’ in European elections. In local and regional elections, citizens on the right side of the ideological scale are less likely to consider level-specific issues than those having left-wing political preferences.

Interestingly, it is in regional elections where political orientations have vis-à-vis individuals’ resources a higher effect on ‘first-order thinking’. One of the more relevant factor in the case of regional elections is regionalist identity, as reported also by previous research (Liñeira, 2016). In fact, after including the variable regionalist supporter in the statistical model, to live in an historic region do not increase the likelihood of considering regional issues. If elections in regions with higher levels of authority are less second-order (as previous research suggested), it is probably due to the presence of more regionalist voters, for which regional issues take precedence over national issues in vote decisions. Regionalist voters are also more likely to consider level-specific issues in European elections.

Conclusions drawn here should be, however, viewed cautiously. Findings are based on a direct question on the relevance attributed to national or level-specific issues in voting decisions. This has advantages over previous measurements, but

also disadvantages: the potential bias due to social desirability in the subjective responses is a possibility that cannot be absolutely excluded. Furthermore, the absence of a similar question in comparative survey studies made it necessary to rely upon survey data from a single country, Spain, which may limit the generalizability of the results to other cases.

Notwithstanding the limitations, this article has several strengths. Whereas most studies on this topic focus on aggregate election outcomes, the present analysis heeds the call for more individual-level analysis to examine the assumptions of the second-order election model. Furthermore, it adds to existing research by analysing and comparing three sorts of elections. Despite the fact that local, regional and European elections are frequently analysed under the same framework of the second-order election model, few analyses have been conducted taking them simultaneously.

Knowing the factors that correlate with ‘first-order thinking’ is not a trivial matter but essential for prescriptive reasons if we are interested in improving the way in which democracy works in multi-level systems of governance. If the results of a given election are determined by issues that are beyond the specific arena being contested, representatives would have few incentives to pursue voters’ preferences at that level. In that sense, subsequent research may focus on whether, as descriptive evidence shown here suggest, there are differences in terms of voting behaviour between those citizens that vote on the basis of level-specific issues and those who do not, moving from the causes to the possible consequences.

4.8 References

- Abedi, A. and Siaroff, A. (1999), 'The mirror has broken: Increasing divergence between national and land elections in Austria', *German Politics* 8(1): 207–227.
- Anderson, C.D. (2006), 'Economic Voting and Multilevel Governance: A Comparative Individual-Level Analysis', *American Journal of Political Science* 50(2): 449–463.
- Armingeon, K., Guthmann, K. and Weisstanner, D. (2016), 'How the Euro divides the union: the effect of economic adjustment on support for democracy in Europe', *Socio-Economic Review* 14(1): 1–26.
- Blair, H. (2000), 'Participation and Accountability at the Periphery: Democratic Local Governance in Six Countries', *World Development* 28(1): 21–39.
- Brug, W. van der, Gattermann, K. and Vreese, C.H. de. (2016), 'Introduction: How Different Were the European Elections of 2014?', *Politics and Governance* 4(1): 1–8.
- Cabeza, L., Gómez, B. and Alonso, S. (2017), 'How National Parties Nationalize Regional Elections: The Case of Spain', *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 47(1): 77–98.
- Carrubba, C. and Timpone, R.J. (2005), 'Explaining Vote Switching Across First- and Second-Order Elections Evidence From Europe', *Comparative Political Studies* 38(3): 260–281.
- Chacha, M. (2013), 'Regional attachment and support for European integration', *European Union Politics* 14(2): 206–227.
- Clark, N. and Rohrschneider, R. (2009), 'Second-Order Elections versus First-Order Thinking: How Voters Perceive the Representation Process in a Multi-Layered System of Governance', *Journal of European Integration* 31(5): 645–664.
- Curtice, J. And Payne, C. (1991), 'Local elections as national referendums in Great Britain', *Electoral Studies* 10(1): 3–17.
- Dandoy, R. and Schakel, A.H. (eds.) (2013), *Regional and National Elections in Western Europe. Territoriality of the Vote in Thirteen Countries*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Delgado, I. (2010), 'Entre el primer y el segundo orden: ¿qué lugar para las elecciones municipales de 2007?', *Política y Sociedad* 47(2): 153–173.
- Elias, A., Szöcsik, E. and Zuber, C.I. (2015), 'Position, selective emphasis and framing. How parties deal with a second dimension in competition', *Party Politics* 21(6): 839–850.

- Freire, A. and Santana-Pereira, J. (2015), 'More Second-Order than Ever? The 2014 European Election in Portugal', *South European Society and Politics* 20(3): 381–401.
- Gélineau, F. and Remmer, K.L. (2006), 'Political Decentralization and Electoral Accountability: The Argentine Experience, 1983-2001', *British Journal of Political Science* 36(1): 133–157.
- Gómez, B. and Cabeza, L. (2013), 'Spain: The Persistence of Territorial Cleavages and Centralism of the Popular Party', in: Dandoy, R. and Schakel, A. H. (eds.), *Regional and National Elections in Western Europe Territoriality of the Vote in Thirteen Countries*, Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 196–215.
- Gómez-Reino, M. and Plaza, C. (2016), 'Populist Euroscepticism in the Iberian Peninsula', paper presented at the ECPR General Conference, September 7-9, Prague.
- Guinjoan, M. (2014), *Parties, Elections and Electoral Contests: Competition and Contamination Effects*, Farnham: Ashgate Publishing.
- Gyárfášová, O. (2017), 'The EU Agenda as an Emerging Cleavage of Political Competition? Parties and Their Voters in Slovakia', in: Boicu, R., Branea, S. and Stefanel, A. (eds.), *Political Communication and European Parliamentary Elections in Times of Crisis*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 151–165.
- Heath, A., McLean, I., Taylor, B. and Curtice, J. (1999), 'Between first and second order: a comparison of voting behaviour in european and local elections in Britain', *European Journal of Political Research* 35(3): 389–414.
- Hix, S. (2007), 'Euroscepticism as Anti-Centralization: A Rational Choice Institutional Perspective', *European Union Politics* 8(1): 131–150.
- Hix, S. and Marsh, M. (2007), 'Punishment or Protest? Understanding European Parliament Elections', *Journal of Politics* 69(2): 495–510.
- Hix, S. and Marsh, M. (2011), 'Second-order effects plus pan-European political swings: An analysis of European Parliament elections across time', *Electoral Studies* 30(1): 4–15.
- Hobolt, S.B. and Wittrock, J. (2011), 'The second-order election model revisited: an experimental test of vote choices in European Parliament elections', *Electoral Studies* 30(1): 29–40.
- Jeffery, C. and Hough, D. (2003), 'Regional Elections in Multi-Level Systems', *European Urban and Regional Studies* 10(3): 199–212.
- Jérôme, B. and Lewis-Beck, M.S. (1999), 'Is local politics local? French evidence', *European Journal of Political Research* 35(2): 181–197.

- Ruiz Jiménez, A.M., González-Fernández, M.T. and Jiménez Sánchez, M. (2015), 'Identifying with the Nation: Spain's Left-Wing Citizens in an Age of Crisis', *South European Society and Politics* 20(4): 487–508.
- Jolly, S.K. (2007), 'The Europhile Fringe? Regionalist Party Support for European Integration', *European Union Politics* 8(1): 109–130.
- Jolly, S.K. (2014), 'Strange bedfellows: public support for the EU among regionalists', in: Gould, A. C. and Messina, A. M. (eds.), *Europe's Contending Identities Supranationalism, Ethnoregionalism, Religion, and New Nationalism*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 81–99.
- Key, V.O., Jr. (1966), *The responsible electorate: rationality in presidential voting, 1936-1960*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Koepke, J.R. and Ringe, N. (2006), 'The Second-order Election Model in an Enlarged Europe', *European Union Politics* 7(3): 321–346.
- Lefevere, J. and Van Aelst, P. (2014). 'First-order, second-order or third-rate? A comparison of turnout in European, local and national elections in the Netherlands', *Electoral Studies* 35: 159–170.
- León, S. (2014), 'How does decentralization affect electoral competition of state-wide parties? Evidence from Spain', *Party Politics* 20(3): 391–402.
- Lijphart, A. (1997), 'Unequal Participation: Democracy's Unresolved Dilemma Presidential Address', *The American Political Science Review* 91(1): 1–14.
- Liñeira, R. (2016), 'Second-Order Elections: Everyone, Everywhere? Regional and National Considerations in Regional Voting', *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 46(4): 510–538.
- Marien, S., Dassonneville, R. and Hooghe, M. (2015), 'How Second Order Are Local Elections? Voting Motives and Party Preferences in Belgian Municipal Elections', *Local Government Studies* 41(6): 898–916.
- Marks, G., Wilson, C. J. and Ray, L. (2002), 'National Political Parties and European Integration', *American Journal of Political Science* 46(3): 585–594.
- Marsh, M. (1998), 'Testing the Second-Order Election Model after Four European Elections', *British Journal of Political Science* 28(4): 591–607.
- McCombs, M.E. And Shaw, D.L. (1972), 'The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media', *Public Opinion Quarterly* 36(2): 176–187.
- Miller, W.L. (1988), *Irrelevant Elections?: The Quality of Local Democracy in Britain*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Moreno, L. (2001), *The Federalization of Spain*, London: Routledge.

- Nie, N.H., Verba, S. and Petrocik, J.R. (1980), *The Changing American Voter: Enlarged Edition*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Nielsen, J.H. and Franklin, M.N. (2017), 'The 2014 European Parliament Elections: Still Second Order?', in: Nielsen, J. H. and Franklin, M. N. (eds.), *The Eurosceptic 2014 European Parliament Elections*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1–16.
- Pallarés, F. and Keating, M. (2003), 'Multi-Level Electoral Competition. Regional Elections and Party Systems in Spain', *European Urban and Regional Studies* 10(3): 239–255.
- Rallings, C. and Thrasher, M. (2005), 'Not All "Second-Order" Contests are the Same: Turnout and Party Choice at the Concurrent 2004 Local and European Parliament Elections in England', *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 7(4): 584–597.
- Reif, K. (1984), 'National electoral cycles and European elections 1979 and 1984', *Electoral Studies* 3(3): 244–255.
- Reif, K. and Schmitt, H. (1980), 'Nine Second-Order National Elections: a Conceptual Framework for the Analysis of European Election Results', *European Journal of Political Research* (8): 3–44.
- Rodden, J. and Wibbels, E. (2011), 'Dual accountability and the nationalization of party competition: Evidence from four federations', *Party Politics* 17(5): 629–653.
- Schakel, A.H. (2011), 'Congruence Between Regional and National Elections', *Comparative Political Studies* 46(5): 631–662.
- Schakel, A.H. (2015), 'How to analyze second-order election effects? A refined second-order election model', *Comparative European Politics* 13(6): 636–655.
- Schakel, A.H. and Jeffery, C. (2013), 'Are regional elections really 'second-order' elections?', *Regional Studies* 47(3): 324–341.
- Schleicher, D. (2016), 'Federalism and State Democracy', *Texas Law Review* 95. Available from <http://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=2739791>
- Schmitt, H. (2005), 'The European Parliament Elections of June 2004: Still Second-Order?', *West European Politics* 28(3): 650–679.
- Schmitt, H., Sanz, A. and Braun, D. (2008), 'The Micro-Foundations of Second-order Election Theory: Theoretical Reconstructions and Empirical Tests Based Upon the European Election Study 2004', paper presented at the Comparative Citizen Politics Workshop, December 9-11, Manchester.
- Schmitt, H. and Toygür, I. (2016), 'European Parliament Elections of May 2014: Driven by National Politics or EU Policy Making?', *Politics and Governance* 4(1): 167–181.

- Skrinis, S. and Teperoglou, E. (2008), 'Studying and Comparing Second-Order Elections: Examples from Greece, Portugal and Spain', in: Eijk, C. Van der and Schmitt, H. (eds.), *The multinivel Electoral Systems of the EU*, Mannheim: CONNEX, 163–190.
- Toubeau, S. and Wagner, M. (2015), 'Explaining Party Positions on Decentralization', *British Journal of Political Science* 45(1): 97–119.
- Van der Eijk, C., Franklin, M. and Marsh, M. (1996), 'What voters teach us about Europe-Wide elections: What Europe-Wide elections teach us about voters', *Electoral Studies* 15(2): 149–166.
- Verba, S. and Nie, N.H. (1987), *Participation in America: Political Democracy and Social Equality*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

4.9 Appendix

Description of the datasets (study number in parentheses)

	European elections (state-wide)	Regional elections (17 regions)	Local elections (4 municipalities)
1999	N=3,262 (CIS 2325)		
2004	N=3,509 (CIS 2564)		
2007		N=9,214 ^a (CIS 2707 to 2719)	N=2,308 (CIS 2720 to 2723)
2009	N=3,493 (CIS 2800)		
2011		N=15,444 ^a (CIS 2870 to 2882)	N=2,322 (CIS 2866 to 2869)
2012		N=4,802 ^b (CIS 2939; 2963; 2964)	
2014	N=3,567 (CIS 3022)		
2015		N=18,305 ^c (CIS 3064 to 3076; 3108)	N=2,295 (CIS 3060 to 3063)
Total	N=13,831	N=47,765	N=6,925

^a 13 ordinary regions

^b Andalusia, Galicia and Basque Country

^c 13 ordinary regions and Catalonia

Chapter 5

Conclusions

The transfer of powers from the national government downwards to local and regional authorities, and upwards to supra-national units entails the proliferation of elections at multiple levels of government in many countries. This has consequences for voters and parties. Voters are confronted with the task to elect not just national representatives, but also local, regional and, in the case of EU citizens, European ones. Parties need to meet the requirements of competition at different arenas simultaneously.

Regardless of the many elections taking place at different levels of government, there is a tendency among political scientist to choose the national level as the unit of analysis (Jeffery and Schakel, 2013). This would not be an issue if what we know regarding the behaviour of voters and parties in general elections could be transferred without further considerations to elections taking place at upper or lower levels. In an ideal world, voters would be perfectly able to attribute political responsibilities and to hold representatives accountable for their actions in each level independently. And there would be no incentive for politicians to develop strategies of credit-claiming and blame-avoidance contributing to blur the

responsibilities of each jurisdiction. But in the real world, elections are not held in isolation one from another.

According to the second-order election model, the only decisive elections are the national presidential or parliamentary ones (Reif and Schmitt, 1980). The rest are subordinated to them, in the sense that voters use sub-national and supra-national elections to reward or punish national governments not to express their preferences on level-specific issues. This raises concerns about how democracy works in multi-level states (Anderson 2006; Papadopoulos, 2007). Elections are the most essential mechanism to reward and punish representatives. Politicians pursue good policies once in office because they want to be re-elected. If citizens decide their vote on the basis of national issues, sub-national and supra-national politicians could diverge from their constituents' preferences because their re-election would not depend on their actions. This is especially relevant because the authority and powers of local, regional and European institutions are on the rise. Sub-national and supra-national authorities have an increasingly share of responsibility in important policy domains affecting the life of citizens.

This dissertation contributes to a recently emerging wave of studies which challenge the inherent 'methodological nationalism' in comparative politics (Jeffery and Schakel, 2013), questioning the common assumption that developments at sub-national and supra-national elections in multi-level democracies are fundamentally driven by national-level factors. Both the supply- and the demand-side are analysed. The unit of analysis in the first and the second article of this dissertation are the parties, while the third article focuses on voters. In all of them, Spain constitutes the main case study, with one of the articles additionally looking at the case of United Kingdom. With regard to Spain, it has been said that this country 'is a federation in all but name' (Elazar, 1991: 227). Indeed, although legally it is a unitary state, Spain is considered to be 'a *de facto* federal system' (Hueglin and Fenna, 2006: 19). It has been characterized as a case of 'federalism without formal federation' (Erk 2004: 3), imperfect federalism (Moreno, 1994); non-institutional federalism (Colomer, 1998); incomplete federalism (Grau Creus, 2000); unfulfilled federalism (Beramendi and Maiz,

2004) or fully fledged federation (Sala, 2014). Spain has evolved from a hyper-centralist state to a highly decentralized country in a relatively short period of time. The process of decentralization has not been uniform and there are big territorial disparities. Spanish regions cover all possible situations: there are regions with medium and with high levels of decentralization; regions that collect their own taxes; regions that followed the ‘fast-track’ or the ‘slow-track’ towards self-government; regions with and without regionalist parties; regions with different languages, history and culture; etc. Additionally, there is a high degree of autonomy at the local level. Elections to the European Parliament were introduced in 1987. Spain is, therefore, a good laboratory for scholars of territorial politics to test all kind of hypothesis, keeping constant country-level characteristics. At the same time, I believe that the results and lessons extracted mainly from the case of Spain, and to a lesser extent also from the British case, are likely to be applicable to other countries. Spain and United Kingdom stand out in some respects that might impair generalization. First, in both countries regional identity is strong and territorial issues are highly politicized. Second, these countries are characterized by the existence of electorally successful regionalist parties, that operate at various levels of government. Although these two characteristics are absent from a number of multi-level states, economic disparities or cultural differences between regions in the same country are likely to encourage the salience of the territorial cleavage. Regional branches of political parties may develop level-specific programmatic profiles, diverging from the positions and preferences of the national co-partisans. In what follows, I will describe the main general conclusions of the different contributions encompassing this dissertation.

The repertoire of party strategies is wider and more versatile in multi-level states. The political space can be defined by, at least, two major dimensions of competition: a socioeconomic (left-right) and a territorial dimension (centre-periphery). Political parties may choose both the saliency of each dimension and the position adopted. They have to decide if they want to compete in both dimensions simultaneously or only in their primary dimension, and whether to

ignore the issues belonging to the secondary dimension completely or to adopt an ambiguous position (Elias, Szöcsik and Zuber, 2015).

The first article of this cumulative dissertation has shown that regionalist parties develop their strategies not only along their main dimension of competition, the centre-periphery dimension, as if they were niche parties. They also do so along the socioeconomic dimension, adopting a clear left-right position or very often remaining ambiguous and vague. On the other hand, state-wide parties, whose main dimension of competition is the socioeconomic one, incorporate territorial issues in their agenda, especially (but not exclusively) when they face the competition of regionalist parties.

In multi-level countries, issue position and saliency are inevitably linked to one electoral arena. When preparing their campaigns, parties have to decide not just the position and saliency on the set of issues that conform a particular dimension of competition; they also have to decide the geographical – both vertical and horizontal – distribution of these positions and saliencies. Such distribution implies decisions about which issues and dimensions have to be emphasized in each electoral arena. One could expect parties emphasizing level-specific issues in each arena. Nevertheless, this is not always the case.

The second research question addressed in this dissertation is precisely whether parties wilfully contaminate non-national elections with national issues in order to obtain electoral gains. The second article encompassing this dissertation makes a solid contribution to the analysis of contamination effects between electoral arenas in multi-level systems. The literature in this area has generally lacked a systematic account of the mechanism whereby there is variation across elections and regions in the extent to which national elections have an effect upon the electoral fate of sub-national politicians (Gschwend, 2008). Previous research has focused on voter's capacity to distinguish competences across levels of governments. The second article contributes to advance this literature by proposing an additional mechanism to account for variation in the 'contamination' between electoral arenas, namely parties' strategies aimed at nationalizing competition in regional elections. Evidence is provided on the fact that when the

economy is going well, regional branches of state-wide parties try to take credit of the popularity of the national co-partisans in office. In turn, the regional co-partisans of the national opposition party emphasize national issues during regional election campaigns in times of economic downturn in order to transform regional elections into a plebiscite on the performance of the national incumbent party.

Finally, the third article has shifted the focus from the parties to the voters, including local and European elections into the analysis. It is shown that while only a minority takes European issues into account during elections to the European Parliament, the majority of people report that local and regional issues determine their behaviour in local and regional elections, respectively. However, there are differences in ‘first-order thinking’ among individuals depending on their resources and political orientations. For instance, low-educated and unemployed people tend to consider issues that are specific to the arena being contested in sub-national and supra-national elections less often than those with high education or employment.

In sum, political parties not only adapt to multi-level structures and strategize along the territorial dimension of competition. They can also play an active role in fostering the ‘contamination’ between electoral arenas. As long as they expect to earn electoral credit for that, they actively campaign in non-national elections stressing national-level issues. Nevertheless, the image of accountability just functioning at the national level does not mirror the reality of multi-level states. While it is true that knowledgeable voters seem to understand better the complexity of multi-level governance, local and regional elections are not comparable to elections to the European Parliament with regards to the proportion of citizens making their choices on the basis of national issues.

5.1. References

- Anderson, C.D. (2006), 'Economic Voting and Multilevel Governance: A Comparative Individual-Level Analysis', *American Journal of Political Science* 50 (2): 449–463.
- Beramendi, P. and Máiz, R. (2004), 'Spain: Unfulfilled Federalism (1978-1996)', in: Amoretti, U.M. and Bermeo, N., *Federalism and Territorial Cleavages*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 123–154.
- Colomer, J.M. (1998), 'The Spanish 'State of Autonomies': Non-Institutional Federalism', *West European Politics* 21 (4): 40–52.
- Elazar, D.J. (1991), *Federal Systems of the World: A Handbook of Federal, Confederal and Autonomy Arrangements*. Harlow: Longman Group UK Limited.
- Elias, A., Szöcsik, E. and Zuber, C.I. (2015), 'Position, Selective Emphasis and Framing How Parties Deal with a Second Dimension in Competition', *Party Politics* 21 (6): 839–850.
- Erk, J. (2004), 'Austria: A Federation without Federalism', *Publius* 34 (1): 1–20.
- Grau Creus, M. (2000), 'Spain: Incomplete Federalism', in Wachendorfer-Schmidt, U. (ed.), *Federalism and Political Performance*, London: Routledge/ECPR Studies in European Political Science, 58–77.
- Gschwend, T. (2008), 'Studying Contamination Effects in Multi-Level Systems of Governance: First Thoughts about Hypotheses and Research Design', in: Eijk, C. Van der and Schmitt, H. (eds.), *The Multilevel Electoral System of the EU*, Mannheim: CONNEX, 229–240.
- Hueglin, T.O. and Fenna, A. (2006), *Comparative Federalism: A Systematic Inquiry*. Peterborough: Broadview Press.
- Jeffery, C., and Schakel, A.H. (2013), 'Insights: Methods and Data Beyond Methodological Nationalism', *Regional Studies* 47 (3): 402–404.
- Moreno, L. (1994), 'Ethnoterritorial Concurrence and Imperfect Federalism in Spain', in: Villiers, B. (ed.), *Evaluating Federal Systems*, Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 162–193.
- Papadopoulos, Y. (2007), 'Problems of Democratic Accountability in Network and Multilevel Governance', *European Law Journal* 13 (4): 469–486.
- Reif, K. and Schmitt, H. (1980), 'Nine Second-Order National Elections – a Conceptual Framework for the Analysis of European Election Results', *European Journal of Political Research* 8: 3–44.
- Sala, G. (2014), 'Federalism without Adjectives in Spain', *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 44 (1): 109–134.

